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A DISCUSSION OF THE CONCEPTS REASON, REVELATION AND NATURE IN BISHOP BUTLER'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the three concepts Reason, Revelation and Nature in the moral philosophy of Bishop Butler. Butler was a Christian apologist who wanted to provide an empirical theory of morals in keeping with the secular tone of his age, yet which did not exclude the divine. His method of study was to investigate the constitution of human nature, and from this he concluded that to follow nature was to follow the path of virtue. Although his method of study appears consistently empirical, Butler's use of speculative reason and admittance of revealed knowledge indicates that he was not a strict empiricist in conviction.

Butler's naturalism is firmly grounded in religion, by his belief that man is the work of God, is naturally virtuous, and that this, together with the commands of conscience, leads man to act a just and good role in life. It is in Butler's conception of conscience that we most clearly see how Reason, Revelation and Nature are related to each other in his philosophy. I interpret Butler's view of conscience as a moral faculty with two operational levels, the rational part which takes note of all the facts in a moral situation, and the intuitional part by which a moral pronouncement is made. This latter process is easier to understand when it is realized that conscience for Butler is a medium of communication between God and man.

Butler's contribution to moral philosophy stems not

only from his interesting analysis of conscience, but also from the way he reconciles self-interest and duty. According to Butler, men act virtuously, because they are secure in the knowledge that they are obeying God and so will be ultimately rewarded. There is an additional sanction in acting virtuously, we have a better chance of happiness because it is obeying our own nature to so do.

Thus a man knows his obligations not only through the revelatory medium of the Scriptures, but through the nature of man, and specifically through the divinely implanted moral faculty.

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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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INTRODUCTION

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The eighteenth century was characterized by a reaction against all that was traditional and accepted, whether in politics, religion, philosophy or any of the sciences. It was an age of optimism, of hope and a belief in the perfectibility of man.

> 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast,
> Man never Is, but always to be blest.'
> (Pope Essay on Man[1], 1, p.39)

The march of physical and astronomical science led by Newton had overthrown the Christian cosmos with its hierarchy, and opened up an infinite universe, ordered by laws universally and uniformly applicable. This rapid development of empirical knowledge and its application raised problems in the field of social theory and moral values that the theology of the time did not satisfactorily answer.

One man who made no mean contribution to the constant flux of ideas was Bishop Butler, and in his work there is visible a synthesis between the long-held tenets of religion and the new scientific theism and rationalism that was

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[1] References to works by writers other than Butler, are taken from editions specified in the bibliography.

emerging. Although there was not present an open conflict between science and Religion, as there was, for example after the publication of Darwin's work[2], the new discoveries obviously changed men's conceptions of the universe and its workings, and encouraged the emancipation of philosophy from theology. Religious institutions and religious explanations were slowly displaced from the centre of life to its periphery. The dangers of secularisation and consequent doctrines such as atheism and materialism aiding the decay of 'true religion' were realized with some anxiety by various Churchmen. Thus Samual Clarke called the eighteenth century, "this sceptical and profane age", (Preface - Boyles Lectures) whilst Butler was very conscious of the growth of anti-religious feeling, and the inordinate prevalence of a narrow self-regard.

> 'It is come I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not so much a subject of inquiry: but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of

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[2] Boyle wrote that by being addicted to experimental philosophy a man was rather assisted than indisposed to be a good Christian (The Christian Virtuoso 1690). Whilst Newton wrote a considerable number of theological works and was venerated as the great defender of Christianity, as God was manifested through Nature.

> discernment; and nothing remained,
> but to set it up as a principal
> subject of mirth and ridicule, as
> it were by way of reprisals, for its having
> so long interrupted the pleasures of
> the world.'
> (Advertisement to the Analogy, 2,p.1)[3]

Swift also protested:

> 'It will be granted, that hardly one
> in a hundred among our people of quality
> or gentry appears to act by any principle
> of religion; that great numbers of them
> do entirely discard it.... Nor is the
> case much better among the vulgar.'
> (A Project for the Advancement of Religion
> and the Reformation of Manners. Works,
> Vol. XIII, p.205)

Such indignation was not merely a clergyman's touchiness, for there is considerable evidence that the Established Church was under severe attack, and that there was prevalent a great deal of dissatisfaction with the way the Clergy were performing

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[3] I have already mentioned my general conventions of reference. References to the writings of Butler are from Gladstone's editions of the Sermons and Analogy. References are given by part, chapter, section and then page number.

their duties. Even Butler is reported to have said at the time that Thomas Sherlock, Bishop of London, refused the primacy of all England in Canterbury on the grounds that, "it was too late for him (Sherlock) to try to support a falling Church." At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Church as an institution was viewed by many as neglectful of its spiritual duties, complacent, hypocritical and generally in a state of decline. A fundamental re-statement of religious ideas and a greater concern for the moral well-being of the congregation was called for.

In this study we are concerned principally with Butler's moral philosophy, but we shall find that this cannot be studied in isolation, away from his theological doctrine. Hence, in the first chapter of this thesis I have tried to show the important connections between his theological convictions, and the methodological considerations of his moral philosophy. Butler deliberately set out from the position of a zealous Churchman to give an answer to the various moral problems besetting Christians, an answer couched in the empirical method of his day. The history of eighteenth century religious speculation is one of challenge and response. The challenge came from the emptiness which ensued in the minds of many thinking men from the collapse of the traditional world picture. The response came from such writers as the British Moralists (among whom was Butler) who believed that if we know the origin of moral life, then we would know

its status; whether it was God-given, natural, or artificial, i.e. created by man solely for his own purposes. These men wished also to investigate moral criteria: given that mankind does distinguish between actions and approves and disapproves, deeming some actions 'good' others 'bad', how does this moral discernment occur? On these issues the British Moralists were divided in their opinions, as we shall discover, but one aim they shared was to make men virtuous. This concern was not just a theoretical one, it seemed to be their task to lead men away from vice. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the evident link between ethical and political speculation. The philosophers were most concerned with the security of society, for social life was a necessity if man was to survive, and its success required a subordination of private interest for public benefit. Certainly this was the opinion of such men as Mandeville and Hume, and even as far back as Hobbes in the seventeenth century.

> 'And therefore so long a man is in the conditions of mere nature (which is a condition of war) as private appetite is the measure of good and evil: and consequently all men agree on this, that peace is good, and therefore also the way, or means of peace which ..... are justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, mercy and the rest of the laws of

nature, are good; that is to say:
moral virtues: and their contrary
vices evil.'
(Hobbes, Leviathan in Raphael, Vol. i, p.51)

'It was more beneficial for every
Body to conquer than indulge his
interest, and much better to mind
the Publick than what seemed his
private interest.'
(Mandeville The Fable of the Bees I, p.28)

'All men are sensible of the necessity
to maintain peace and order..... Yet
not withstanding this strong and
obvious necessity such is the fraility
and perverseness of our nature! It is
impossible to keep men faithfully and
unerringly in the paths of justice.
Some extraordinary circumstances may
happen in which a man finds his interests
to be more promoted by fraud and rapine
than hurt by the breach which his
injustice makes in the social union.
But much more frequently he is seduced
from his great and important but
distant interests, by the allowment

> of present, though often very
> frivolous temptations. This great
> weakness is incurable in human nature.
> Men must therefore, endeavour to
> palliate what they cannot cure.'
> (Hume Of the Origin of Government, p.35)

Having stated the problem, philosophers advanced various ways in which men could acquire the social virtues. For instance Hobbes abscribed to the sovereign the power of the Old Testament God. The moral was identified with the positive law; that is wrong which the sovereign forbids; that is right which he allows. Mandeville agreed with Hobbes that moral regulation is not natural to man, but is externally imposed upon him. He put forward the thesis that private vices promoted public benefit, for man needed the threat of evil to overcome his indolence, and needed vanity and greed to furnish motivation for those accomplishments which separate civilisation from barbarianism. Hume differed somewhat from the other two, in that for him political and moral problems were not synonymous. His moral theory rested on the assumption that sympathy is not a form of egoism, and that moral sentiments are a species of sympathy; but his political theory takes for granted that man is predominantly selfish and often foolish. He maintains that men are truly benevolent in the circle of their family and friends, but that this benevolence is too weak to operate towards mankind in

general. So, he urges men to act virtuously in order to preserve society and certain political institutions are set up to aid them in this aim.

Earlier in the century John Locke had maintained that the practising of virtue in regard to one's fellow men was further reinforced by God's causing happiness to occur in association with virtue.

> 'For God having by inseparable connection joined virtue and public happiness together; and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of society, and visibly beneficial to all, with whom the virtuous man has to do.'
> (Essay Concerning Human Understanding in Works, Vol. I, p.37)

As we shall later discourse in Chapter III this was a popularly held opinion from which Butler did not dissent. Like his contemporaries, Butler believed that man was essentially a social animal.

> 'And therefore to have no restraint from, no regard to others in our behaviour, is the speculative absurdity of considering ourselves as single and independent, as having nothing in our nature which has

> respect to our fellow-creatures,
> reduced to action and practice.
> And this is the same absurdity, as to
> suppose a hand or any part to have no
> natural respect to any other, or
> to the whole body.'
>
> (Sermon I, 10, p.45)

But he had no illusions concerning the failure of the majority of men to behave virtuously in society, and so the necessity of encouraging such behaviour.

As I maintain that Butler's moral theory centres around his use of the three concepts, Reason, Revelation and Nature, I have, in discussing his examination of man's nature and motivations, been principally concerned with his manipulation of these three ideas. Let us for the moment look at the concepts in a general way. Throughout the ages, philosophers in their quest to discover the source of morality, had to consider whether moral knowledge was attained by reason, or revealed to men by God. Between these two choices stood the doctrine of Natural Law, which held moral truths to be prior to experience and God given, yet directly discoverable by each human being through reason. Four texts quoted in d'Entrèves which are relevant to our study, will follow below. They stretch from ancient times to the seventeenth century and in them can be seen some of the different inter-

pretations of Natural Law. There were attempts to prove that various maxims of conduct were the dictates of Nature, and that any mode of thinking, feeling or acting when 'according to nature' should be accepted as strong argument for its goodness. Indeed, Cicero's idea of Natural Law is most interesting for its similarity with later Christian conceptions.

> 'True law is right reason in agreement with Nature: it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting: it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrong-doing by its prohibitions.'
>
> 'And there will not be different laws at Rome and at Athens, or different laws now and in the future, but one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and for all times, and there will be one master and one ruler, that is good over us all, for He is the author of this law, its promulgator and its enforcing judge.'
> (de Republica III, c XXII, 33 quoted in d'Entreves, p.21)

For the Greeks pure rational knowledge was supreme and it was by this that men discerned Natural Law, whereas the Early Church differed in their desire to find a justification and

knowledge of the Natural Law in the Scriptures. This latter elevation of the Scriptures was carried into the medieval world, where for instance, St. Augustine's pessimistic view of life resulted in a reduction in importance of Natural Law. As d'Entreves wrote:

> 'With Nature corrupt, with an absolute ideal of Christian perfection, little room was left for a natural order of things, for a system of ethics based on men's nature.'
>
> (Natural Law p.37)

For Augustine the safest way to reach truth was to start from faith, and then to go on from Revelation to Reason, for understanding was the reward of faith.

By the Middle Ages however, a new-found faith in man's own capabilities led to the re-establishment of a system of natural ethics. Aquinas, the great representative of this movement, maintained that although man was a subject of God, he was also a co-operator by the exercise of natural reason.

> 'But, of all others, rational creatures are subject to divine Providence in a very special way; being themselves made

> participators in Providence itself, in that they control their own actions and the actions of others. So they have a certain share in the divine reason itself, deriving therefrom a natural inclination to such actions and ends as are fitting. This participation in the Eternal Law by rational creatures is called the Natural Law.' (Aquinas Summa Theologica, 91, Art. 1 and 2 in d'Entreves, p.40)

During the succeeding centuries Nature as a basis for morality grew in influence, and by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, unbelievers used against theology a purely philosophical wisdom that was exclusively based upon the principles of natural reason and independent of religious revelation. Consequently there was a decisive split between religion and ethics, and Scripture was often no longer appealed to for the laws and sanctions of morality. The man who is generally held to have influenced this secular movement with regards to Natural Law is Grotius. According to him, law must be independent of the arbitrary will of God, and it would be possible to build a theory of laws without theological presuppositions.

> 'What we have been saying would have a degree of validity even if we should

> concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness, that there is no God or that the affairs of men are of no concern to him.'
> (Grotius De Lure Belli ac Pacis, II, quoted in d'Entreves, p.52)

Grotius's theory is purely rational, he wanted the study of Natural Law to be treated as a science, and for this end used mathematics as an analogy.

> 'Measureless as is the power of God, nevertheless it can be said that there are certain things over which that power does not extend... Just as even God cannot cause that two times two should not make four, so He cannot cause that that which is intrinsically evil be not evil.'
> (Grotius, De Lure Belli ac Pacis quoted in d'Entreves, p.53)

This hypothesis was used by eighteenth century scholars who wished to advance a secular Natural Law theory; although Grotius himself had never excluded God from his philosophy. He always maintained that the Law of Nature was implanted in man by God, and moreover, that the revealed laws of God can confirm and assist men in their knowledge of the Law of Nature.

The growing emphasis upon Reason in the seventeenth century, which led to a veneration for 'clear and distinct ideas', resulted not only in the establishment of a naturalistic ethic, but also in a re-statement of Christianity that did not destroy the underlying truths. Rationalism was adopted especially by a group of theologians, known collectively as the Cambridge Platonists, who were concerned to defend religion from Hobbesian materialism, mechanism, sectarianism, 'enthusiasm' and dogmatism. In order to conserve what they considered to be vital in religious tradition, the Cambridge philosophers turned to Platonic philosophy, and attempted to reconcile it with Christianity. They refused to divorce the rational from the spiritual:

> 'There is nothing so intrinsically Rational,
> as Religion is; nothing, that can so
> Justify itself; nothing, that has
> so pure Reason to recommend itself;
> as Religion has.'
> (Whichcote Aphorisms, number 221, quoted
> in Cassirer, p.53)

For the use of Reason not only involved the discipline of thinking exactly and philosophically, but involved the purification of the heart and the controlling of the will, in the pursuit of Truth. Spiritual knowledge was achieved by the soul creating the divine within itself and thereby making itself like the divine. Reason in man was like 'the candle

of the Lord', and to go against Reason was to go against God. There was never any conflict between natural and revealed truth (that is by reason and by faith) because revelation anticipated and completed the findings of reason.

Concentration on the creative side of knowing meant that morality was conceived as the natural result of a divine life. Right and wrong belonged to the eternal nature of things, and even the will of God could not change them.

> 'Wherefore in the first place, it is a thing which we shall very easily demonstrate, that moral good and evil, just and unjust, honest and dishonest (if they be not mere names without any signification, or names for nothing else but willed and commanded, but have a reality in respect of the persons obliged to do and avoid them) cannot possibly be arbitrary things, made by will without nature; because it is universally true, that things are what they are, not by will but by nature.'
> (Cudworth, A Treatise concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality, Book I, Chpt. II, in Raphael, p.106)

The Cambridge Platonists firmly rejected the Cartesian and Hobbesian derivation of right and wrong; instead morality was conceived as an integral law of man's being. Each individual had his own guide to conduct in the form of conscience, which was governed by reason, and illuminated by revelation which could not be inconsistent with reason itself. The Cambridge philosophers moved away from the very dogmatic and doctrinaire approach to morality, found for example in Puritanism, to a morality that stressed the insight and responsibility of every man, and in this they were the forerunners of many eighteenth century ethical theories.

The Cambridge Platonists serve as a valuable introduction to what we are going to study in this thesis for several reasons.

(1) They are a useful contrast to the rationalism of the eighteenth century. Men such as Clarke 'humanised' Reason, it was no longer a divine light working within man, but was entirely a human faculty. The illuminative aspect of Reason, giving 'new' knowledge to men was no longer important in the eighteenth century. Philosophers such as Clarke wanted a geometrical interpretation of natural phenomena, they wished to control nature, whereas the Cambridge Platonists aimed only to contemplate and understand nature. But, it is the mystical element in the Cambridge conception of religious reason as something more than the power of thinking alone, that

clearly distinguishes them from later rationalists. For, as the eighteenth century progressed Reason was seen by some philosophers in increasingly narrow terms which resulted in an arid intellectualism, perhaps most visible in the Deists.

(2) It is interesting to note the relationship between the Cambridge Platonists and empiricism. The study of natural science was already developing in the seventeenth century and had therefore to be considered by theologians. The Cambridge philosophers were not against experimental research, indeed Cudworth and Moore were members of the Royal Society, but they did not like the philosophic narrowing of the concept of experience, to cover only sense perceptions, for then moral and religious experience would be excluded. Some of the later empiricists saw these difficulties that their theories caused, and tried to remedy the situation by maintaining that revelation was a valuable but <u>independent</u> source of knowledge. Revelation was admitted to be an inner experience just as sensation was an external experience. Indeed, Butler attempts to do something like this in his philosophy, separating Reason and Revelation, yet maintaining that both are equally valuable sources of moral and religious knowledge.

(3) Lastly, the Cambridge Platonists can be held to have had some influence upon Butler. Both aimed at a

re-interpretation of religion in an increasingly secular age, and both wished to re-unite religion and philosophy, and religion and morals; Reason was seen as a useful instrument in this exercise. Certainly their methods were very different, but despite this one can discern similarities, especially in the treatment of conscience and revelation.

By the eighteenth century there was a movement to topple Reason from her lofty philosophical pinnacle. In 1711 Addison wrote that the aim of the period was to bring

> 'philosophy out of closets and libraries,
> schools and colleges to dwell in clubs,
> and assemblies, at tea-tables and in
> coffee houses.'
> (Spectator, No.16, March)

This movement together with the advent of the New Science, which in its quest for pure knowledge attempted to understand man's position within Nature, led to the elevation of the concept of Nature as the formal criterion of validity.

> 'Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
> One clear, unchang'd, and Universal Light,
> Life, Force and Beauty, must to all impart,
> At once the Source and End and Test of Art.'
> (Pope, Essay on Criticism, 1, p.6)

Although philosophers, theologians and moralists were still concerned with the qualities and uses of the human faculty they called Reason, it was the concept of Nature that was established in the thinking of the time with a unique dominance. It was a concept that had a variety of meanings, of which many were contradictory. For instance, consider Shaftsbury's confusing usage.

> 'Strange! That there should be in Nature the idea of an Order and Perfection, which Nature herself wants! That Beings which arise from Nature shou'd be so perfect as to discover Imperfection in her Constitution: and be wise enough to correct that Wisdom by which they were made!'
> (Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times, II, p.284)

Nature was sometimes opposed to the products of Reason such as art and culture, and was even considered by a few to be non-moral and non-rational. Another meaning of 'Nature' opposed it to the supernatural, and another to what is original. The concept appeared frequently in the literature of the age; Defoe's Robinson Crusoe is a study of a man in 'a state of nature', James Thompson (1700-48), Thomas Gray (1716-71) and many others wrote of Nature in their poetry. As far as

moral philosophy was concerned, I think the belief that what was natural was what was good and right, and most often rational, was the one generally maintained. As Diderot wrote in his article on 'heibnizism' in the Encyclopedia 'morality in a good man is but another name for Nature.'

The Christian apologists such as Butler found themselves in a somewhat ambiguous position when expressing their ethical conclusions in naturalist terms. Wishing to remain faithful to the Natural Law tradition, they yet wanted to separate themselves from established theological convictions, such as those expounded by William Law. He founded moral law on the arbitrary will of God, so that the whole of virtue consisted in conforming to, and the whole nature of vice in declining from the will of God. The solution for Butler lay in the maxim that to follow nature was to follow virtue; and to vollow virtue was to follow God.

Butler's empirical approach has caused scholars to wonder whether his ethical studies can be separated from his theology. For instance, Duncan-Jones is of the opinion that

> 'It is possible to extract from Butler's writings a moral philosophy conceived in purely natural terms: that is to

> say, in which there is or need
> be no mention of the supernatural.'
> (Butler's Moral Philosophy, Chpt.7
> p.142)

I do not agree with this statement, as I think Butler's moral philosophy is most unsatisfactory without reference to his theological beliefs. The Analogy was written to show men their obligations and duties, and must therefore be considered with the Sermons in any study on moral philosophy. Indeed, Butler's empiricism is carried into his religious investigations, as for example when he uses the conception of analogy to demonstrate his conclusion that there is a moral governor of the world, i.e. God. The matter of fact from which Butler begins concerns the constitution of nature used in the general sense in his theology, and in the particular, i.e. human nature, in his moral philosophy.

Butler does not posit a religious and moral theory that solves all doubts, and that was never his aim. He admits in the Analogy

> 'It is the most readily acknowledged,
> that the foregoing Treatise is by no
> means satisfactory; veryfar indeed
> from it: but so would any natural
> institution of life appear, if
> reduced into a system, together

with its evidence.'

(II, VIII, 17, p.362)

His aim was similar to Newmans.

'Revelation was not given to satisfy
doubts, but to make us better men
that it becomes light and peace to
our souls, even though to the end
of life we shall find difficulties
in it and in the world around us.'

(Parochial Sermons, I, Sermon 18)

In Butler's case it was not only Revelation, but also Reason and Nature which threw light on men's duties and purpose in life.

I have divided this study into four chapters. In the first, Butler's empirical method is discussed as a rationale for what follows, and leads on to an account of Butler's naturalism in the second chapter. From this we go on to consider two principal moral questions - what it is that motivates man, and how does a man know what are his duties; these necessitate a detailed review of Butler's use of the concepts 'happiness' and 'conscience'.

CHAPTER I

BUTLERS METHODOLOGY

Natural philosophy which included ethical inquiries was concerned with an improved methodology as well as advancing explanations of the world, and this dual preoccupation was also reflected in natural theology. For:

> 'Newton's age, from Bacon through Locke, ...
> was preoccupied with methodological considerations
> for the reason that the scientific revolution
> instituted by Galileo and Newton was even more of
> a revolution in methodology than of systems and
> conclusions.'
> (Hurlbutt, Hume, Newton and the Design Argument, pp 20)

What then, was the methodological link between philosophy and science? There are two aspects: one is the pursuit of mathematical methods into the realm of metaphysical speculation, resulting in the claiming of certitude for theological and ethical convictions. Such an approach was followed by Samuel Clarke. The other alternative is to maintain that philosophical argument proceeds along a posteriori lines by means of analogical reasoning based on observation and experiment. It was thought that philosophy, like Newtonian science involved inference from phenomena i.e. matters of fact, and the resulting knowledge was claimed to be only probable. Whether Bishop Butler read Newton we shall never know, but what is certain is that he followed

the Newtonian a posteriori line of thought and so rejected a priorism. As many of the rationalist thinkers were in direct contradiction to Butler let us briefly look at their philosophical position.[1]

Their principle belief was that there were fundamental truths which were similar to the truths of geometry and thereby self-evident and known by reason. The implication is that these truths exist before a man conceives them; they are part of an eternal order, either instituted by God or self-existent. The facts of morality, for instance, were revealed by strict knowledge, not just opinion or belief, so that the proposition "I know abortion is wrong" would be comparable to "I know the ball has landed in the field: I saw it fall". In a similar manner the existence of God was regarded as equivalent to mathematical truth, whilst the divine nature was reduced entirely into abstract terms.

> 'The self-existent being, must of necessity be but one. This evidently follows from his being necessarily-existent. For necessity absolute in itself is simple and uniform, without any possible difference or variety: and all variety or difference of existence must needs arise from some external cause and be

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[1] When referring to rationalists in this particular discussion I am excluding the Cambridge Platonists, whose doctrine we have examined in the Introduction. Although there is great emphasis on the use of reason in the work of the Cambridge philosophers, their methodology and subsequent conclusions are to be sharply distinguished from the eighteenth century rationalists such as Clarke and Wollaston.

> dependent upon it..... Whatsoever, therefore, exists necessarily is the one simple essence of the self-existent Being; and whatsoever differs from that is not necessarily existing. Because in absolute necessity there can be no difference or diversity of existence.'
>
> (S. Clarke, A Demonstration, pp. 74-75)

Such activities did not escape satirization by Pope, who observed:

> 'We nobly take the high Priori Road,
> And reason downward till we doubt of God.'
>
> (The Dunciad, IV, p.214)

Rationalists had believed themselves to be soundly influenced by Newton, but it is important for us to remember that the latter only claimed probability, and believed that his mathematical mechanical principles had to be empirically grounded. As R. H. Hurlbutt commented:

> 'the well balanced methodology of Newton, which gave mathematics and experiment their due importance, was not consistently understood by some of his followers, hence they were led to frame theories which placed an exclusive emphasis upon either one or the other facet of his thought.'
>
> (Hume, Newton and the Design Argument p.64)

Such a misinterpretation - if one could call it that - was made by Clarke, who inspired by Newtonian ideas set new standards of clarity

and cogency, relying on:

> 'one only method or continuing thread of arguing,
> which I have endeavoured should be as near to mathematical
> as the nature of such a discourse would allow.'
>
> (A Demonstration Preface)

The importance of such views for this discussion lies in the undoubted influence of Clarke upon the young Butler.

The two men had entered into a correspondence from which we learn that Butler, as an eager student, had sought to find a demonstrative proof of the beings and attributes of God. But his quest was to no avail: 'thó' I have got very little way with Demonstration in the proof of those things', and even after the careful explanations of Clarke, Butler remained unconvinced of the usefulness of abstract arguments. This is not to say that Butler was claiming Clarke's method to be invalid, only that as far as he was concerned it was unfruitful. Indeed, he admitted in a letter to his colleague that it may be the case of:

> 'two different expressions of the same thing, tho'
> equally clear to some persons, yet to others, one
> of them is sometimes very obscure, tho' the other
> may be perfectly intelligible.'
>
> (Butler, First Letter p413)

Whilst in the Sermons Butler clearly recognises the legitimacy of a national inquiry into the abstract relation of things concerning morality, admitting that in some respects it was least liable to cavil

and dispute. It could be said that Butler was inconsistent about a priori reasoning, for although a thorough-going empiricist in methodology, he was not so in conviction. His opinion of such procedures as used by Descartes, for example, are stated plainly in his introduction to the Analogy:

> 'Forming our notions of the constitution and government of the world upon reasoning, without foundation for the principles which we assume, whether from the attributes of God, or anything else, is building upon hypothesis'.
>
> (9 p.10)

He disdains the practice of reasoning from certain principles which are applied to cases to which we have no ground to apply them. For example:

> 'those who explain the structure of the human body and the nature of diseases and medicines from mere mathematics without sufficient data.'
>
> (Analogy Introduction 9 p.11)

What then, does Butler consider sufficient data? The answer is threefold for his usual method proceeds from: facts known to others which are like them, from the part to the whole, and lastly from the present to what is probable in the future. But having said all this, if we turn to Chapter 8, in Part II of the Analogy we find Butler admitting that he has deliberately omitted from his discussion two abstract principles in which he believes, that of liberty and moral fitness. The reason for this action is revealed when he says that

questions concerning these principles 'have been perplexed with difficulties and abtruse reasonings', and without liberty and moral fitness, religion can be considered as a question of fact. And for Butler the most satisfying way was to argue from matters of fact which:

> 'is in a peculiar manner adapted to satisfy a fair mind; and is more easily applicable to the several particular relations and circumstances in life.'
>
> (Sermons Preface 7 p.6)

Butler is not denying that man is capable of thinking abstractly, indeed he appears to think that there are certain questions which can be dealt with only speculatively, but he prefers to leave the complexities and intricacies of such issues well alone[2]. Always a cautious man, he accepted that the evidence of one's own experience was more certain than hypothetical argument.

> 'For to pretend to act upon reason, in opposition to practical principles, which the Author of our nature gave us to act upon: and to pretend to apply our reason to subjects with regard to which our own short views and even our experience will show us, it cannot be depended upon ..... this is vanity, conceit and unreasonableness.'
>
> (Analogy I 3)

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[2] Another example similar to the principle of freedom and moral fitness is the question of God's existence, which Butler accepts but does not discuss. He merely talks of discerning intuitively something external to ourselves, and concludes in a burst of abstract speculation that this is: 'an infinite, an immense eternal being existing prior to contributing to his existence and exclusive of it'. (Analogy)

He wished to repudiate the kind of absolute certainty guaranteed by a universal and infallible reason, as advanced by the rationalists, because he maintained that such a claim fell short of its pretensions.

Butler is not concerned with what might be, but what is, to wonder how the world might possibly have been framed otherwise than it is, he regards as vain and idle speculation. Instead he always confines himself to his experimental method which, along with his insistence upon man's ignorance, leads him to his view that, more often than not, certain knowledge is out of our reach. He continually emphasised the fact of man's imperfect knowledge concerning the greater implications of nature's work. The universe consists of many parts, and one cannot be understood without knowing the relationship to the whole, of which we are in ignorance:

> 'we are in no wise judges of many things, of which we are apt to think ourselves very competent ones.'
>
> (Analogy II 3, 4 p.223)

Further, there are many dealings of God, which are not yet completed, and so we see before us only unfinished work and thus cannot judge the results. All we can judge is that which lies before us.

So, for Butler, legitimate reasoning is that which argues by analogy and observation, and there is no doubt that he would have agreed with the following words of Hume:

> 'All our reasonings concerning matters of fact are founded on a species of Analogy, which leads us to expect from any cause the same events, which we

have observed to result from similar causes.'

(An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding IX, 104)

Analogy was Butler's key concept and to argue thus, an empirical methodology is essential, because one begins from premises which describe nature, and are thereby observable. Butler advances from that about which reason and experience inform him, to that which lies outside such knowledge. Holding the opinion, along with Spinoza, Locke and many of his contemporaries that there was an eternal order in things, he concluded that by observing natural phenomena it was possible to discover certain constant laws; and the principle of analogy provided useful machinery in elucidating this natural order, in that an inference can be made from like events, that a general rule probably pertains regarding these events. Butler's method proceeds thus: if event Y happened one day, then the next, then the day after, and keeps on occurring daily, then the probability grows that event Y will always happen. Ultimately we become very sure of our facts, for instance:

> 'there is no man can make a question, but that the sun will rise tomorrow and be seen, where it is seen at all, in the figure of a circle and not in that of a square.'
>
> (Analogy Introduction 8, p.9)

By comparing the events of yesterday and today we are able to discern similarities and thus expect repetition of the same events in the same circumstances tomorrow.

'A man's having observed the ebb and flow of the tide today, affords some sort of presumption, tho' the lowest imaginable, that it may happen again tomorrow, but the observation of this event for so many days and months and ages together as it has been observed by mankind gives us a full assurance that it will.'

(Analogy Introduction p.2)

The causal implications of such an argument are interesting in this discussion on methodology, because they serve to bring out the distinction between the rationalist and empiricist ways of thought. Butler believed that we were surrounded by a multiplicity of related objects, and he would not deny that each object points beyond itself to a cause of its condition; but a causal inference, he would state, is founded upon the relational aspects of that which we observe, revealed by constant association and repetition. Butler did not ascribe to the traditional metaphysical causal speculation, but rather approached the later Humean position. He refused to explain causality by a priori reasoning and was therefore of necessity limited in his conclusions.

'It is indeed in general no more than effects that the most knowing are acquainted with; for as to causes, they are entirely in the dark as the most ignorant. What (else) are the laws by which matter acts upon matter; but certain effects which some, having observed to be frequently repeated, have reduced to general rules.'

(Analogy II 260)

There are certain difficulties inherent in this notion of man's ignorance, in that although Butler would say that everything is ultimately for the best, the cynic would reply that there is just as much evidence that when we see the whole picture everything will be for the worse.[3] The very idea of an inference from the known to the unknown seems to entail a leap of faith, not logic. We have to believe that if God has arranged things in the past, he is somehow committed to doing the same things in the future. But it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that this may not be the case; although the tide has ebbed and flowed since creation, God may have a very good reason for stopping its movement next Monday. The weakness of the argument lies in our ignorance, for granted that we do not know the whole, we can only rely on what is observed, and this may be changed at any moment. Butler begins from his assumption of a God and infers his workings by observing natural phenomena; but consider the inference made to God's justice. One could maintain that the poor and weak are downtrodden, and it is the strong and ruthless who succeed. If this is the case how can we conclude that justice always prevails? Indeed, when we see men acting unjustly, would we not infer that God acts unjustly? Butler would answer both these arguments by stating that had we more knowledge we would realize that ultimately all is for the best.

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[3] It is to be remembered that Butler never intended analogy to prove anything concerning the wisdom or goodness of religion. The analogy of nature only gives a strong credibility to the general doctrine of religion. (Analogy, Chapter VII)

Further complications in Butler's methodology are apparent when we consider his analogy between natural and revealed religion. Having extrapolated certain laws from the natural world, Butler reasons that these laws are also applicable to the realm of Providence.

> 'And let us compare the known constitution and course of things with what is said to be the moral system of nature; the acknowledged dispensations of Providence, or that government which we find ourselves under, with what religion teaches us to believe and expect; and see whether they are not analogous and of a price. And upon such a comparison it will, I think, be found that they are very much so; that both may be traced up to the same general laws and resolved into the same principles of divine conduct'.
>
> (Analogy Introduction, 14 p.15)

But how can one infer the state of something not known? Butler considers that the physical world affords us instances of divine government, but perhaps we have read the signs or effects that we experience wrongly, so that the true state of Providence is completely opposite to what Butler imagines.[4] Leaving the argument thus, it appears totally unsatisfactory to an unbeliever, but if we consider the place of revelation, Butler's procedure is more easily understood.

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[4] The complete sceptic would say there are no signs to read.

For although the ways of God cannot be known empirically, they are not completely "unknown", in that they are revealed to us. Hence, the concept of revelation reinforces Butler's methodology just when needed, for his analogical arguments concerning natural and revealed religion played a vital role in his polemic against the Deists. Butler attempted to convince the latter that God, who was the natural governor of the world, was also the author of the Old and New Testaments. This was denied by the Deists on the grounds that there were too many difficulties and contradictions in the Scriptures. Butler pointed out, however, that this was also the case in nature and yet this did not exclude a belief in God as Creator. If a likeness be conceded to exist between natural and revealed religion, these objections raised against the latter would discredit the former as well. Conversely, belief in the former demands belief in the latter too.

From what has previously been said it can be seen that one of the dangers arising from Butler's method of drawing analogies from matters of fact is the possibility of misinterpretation. He himself relates the Lockian example of the prince who, having always lived in a warm climate, was convinced that there was no such thing as water becoming hard, as he had always observed it in its fluid state. Again, we need only consider Hume's and Butler's respective positions on life after death, for they both select different available facts from the course of nature in order to establish different certain laws. According to Butler, it is reasonable to maintain that what now exists will continue to exist, unless there is any reason for it to cease existing, and we are encouraged by the course of nature to presume that things continue to exist. He begins from the various changes to which natural things are subject, while preserving their essential qualities; for example, one person travels through

babyhood and childhood to become an adult and yet still retains the same character. It is probable therefore that the same man can live after death though radically changed. Hume, on the other hand, posits that everything is in a constant state of flux and change and,

> 'no form can continue when transferred to a condition of life very different from the original one, in which it was placed. Trees perish in the water; fishes in the air; animals in the earth.'
>
> (Essays Moral, Political and Literary III, p.602)

It is interesting to see that Butler investigates this question of whether our interpretations of what we observe and experience is a true one, by means of analogy. Truth for Butler seems to depend to a large extent upon events fulfilling the forecasts of men. There is no straightforward choice between something being true or being false, indeed Butler uses morals such as 'credible', 'supposable', 'may possibly be true', 'presume true' and so forth; it is all a question of degree and the most Butler will say as a general maxim is that only probability is the guide of life. We are thus instructed to proceed in the following way,

> 'in questions of difficulty, or such as are thought so, where more satisfactory evidence cannot be had, or is not seen: if the result of examination be, that there appears upon the whole, any the lowest presumption on one side, and none on the other, or a greater presumption on one side, though in the lowest degree greater; this

determines the question, even in matters of speculation.'

(Analogy Introduction, 5 p.6)

And further, we are obliged in our interest to act upon this probability, however low it may be. It is no wonder that so doubtful a procedure that is wide open to misinterpretation should have roused Hobbes to say in the seventeenth century

'He that believes a thing only because it may be so, may as well doubt of it because it may be otherwise.'

(Quoted from Mossner Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason, p.101)

Had Butler in attempting to escape from the position of extreme doubt (i.e. we cannot say anything about the world), and from the other extreme, a priori certainty, arrived at a vacillating and weak position, contributing very little to the search for truth? I think Butler's defence of his conclusions would lie principally with his insistence upon the reasonableness of following common sense. There are many occasions in everyday life where we take decisions based on only probable evidence: why then, he would say, can we not accept such decisions in ethics and theology? We should be content with our imperfect knowledge and follow the light available.

'If a man were to walk by twilight, must he not follow his eyes as much as if it were broad day and clear sunshine? Or if he were obliged to take a journey by night, would he not give heed to any light showing in the darkness, till the day should break and the daystar arise.'

(Sermon XV 11, pp.267)

Butler believes in a statement when it has a high probability of truth, he thereby acts as if it were true, in other words he accepts its sufficiency as a reason for action.

Having postulated his empirical epistemology Butler further complicates matters by his belief that knowledge is given by God to man in two ways, that is by reason and experience, and revelation. In the latter we must expect to find new truths, for we cannot determine beforehand by reason what will be revealed. For what is the point of revelation if it only communicates what is already known? Butler therefore concluded that, if Scripture is the record of revelation, we shall expect that it will teach us some things which we could not discover without its aid. So it would seem at first glance that reason and revelation appear to exclude each other; and this fact is visible in many of the writings of the century. Indeed a large number of Butler's contemporaries, though having similar opinions about natural religion, departed from him on the point of acceptance of revelation. Let us digress a little to discuss briefly these opposing views.

Religion was natural because it was reasonable, and it was a religion because it still recognised a divinity (though this was not always so in the second half of the eighteenth century). Natural religion was established by understanding the nature of the world, its relation to God, and the laws of God's creatures, and this process of understanding occurs through reason and experience. The world was no longer explained in divine but human terms. A certain group of people who shared such beliefs were the Deists, as they are now called. This was no special sect; Deism was represented by the various ideas,

united by common convictions, of a number of men over a century and a half. The main characteristics of Deism was a fierce attack on traditional Church doctrine. Deists maintained that it was unreasonable and impossible not to believe in God, but Revelation was unnecessary and incredible. Reminding one of the attitude of some philosophers to metaphysics, the Deists sought to rid religion of all that was 'mysterious'. They were indifferent to the authority of the Bible, disbelieved miracles, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, verbal inspirations and were also anti-clerical. The Deists doctrine was essentially that human reason, unaided by revelation, can grasp those parts of religion that most mattered, and human happiness is promoted when these truths are ultimately related to the practical duties of life. Religion should be simple and reasonable and should provide rules for human behaviour; and these rules, the source of morality were not found in the scripture, the ultimate rational standard became the law of nature. 'True religion' was thus a phenomenon noted in nature and was easily accessible to all men.

> 'It is as bright as the heavenly light and free from all ambiguities .... The common understanding inherent in man's nature is sufficient, without skill in books and languages to lead him to the necessary knowledge of his faith and obedience.'
> (Peter Annet The Resurrection of Jesus, 1744 p.9; quoted by Stromberg Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England p.65)

It is hardly surprising that this natural religion became reduced to rational ethics; religious explanations were slowly displaced from the centre of life to its periphery, and indeed, in some cases, vanished completely. The Deists held that God was a beneficient Creator who had retired from activity leaving man to understand the general mechanical laws of nature. He was a remote, impersonal God, for the Deists encouraged by Newtonian discoveries found it difficult to reconcile Newton's master physicist with the Jehovah of the Old Testament. But this does not mean that Deism is to be confused with any form of atheism. The Deists as a group asserted God's existence as an absolute certainty. For example, Thomas Chubb wrote,

> 'That there is a Deity, or governing mind, who gave being to all things external to himself, and who exists by or from, an absolute necessity is to me, most evident and plain.....
> I think atheism, in point of argument, is unsupportable.'
> (Thomas Chubb in Posthumous Works quoted by Stromberg Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England p.59)

Butler who attacked Deistic views in his Analogy was quite as able to reconcile God's various attributes as could Locke, one of his philosophical mentors. Both men desired a rationalist theology which still maintained a revealed religion. Like the Deists, they wished to exclude the 'mysteries' and high flown metaphysical speculations of Christianity, but revelation they considered, was not part

of such paraphernalia. Because of man's limitations, reason alone was not adequate in the obtaining of knowledge and so the addition of revelatory information was necessary.

> 'But natural religion, in its full extent, was nowhere that I know, taken care of by the form of natural reason. It should seem by the little that has hitherto been done in it, that it is too hard a task for unassisted reason to establish, morality in all its parts, upon its true foundation, with a clear and convincing light.'
> (Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, Vol.VII p.139)

Butler in the Analogy put forward a similar argument; an examination of the world gives evidence that the light of Nature is not sufficient for all religious instruction as,

> 'no man in seriousness and simplicity of mind can possibly think it so, who consider the state of religion in the heathen world before revelation and its present state in those places which have borrowed no light from it; particularly the doubtfulness of some of the greatest men, concerning things of the utmost importance, as well as the natural inattention and ignorance of mankind in general.'
> (Analogy II. 1. 1. p.185)

Whilst Butler believed men are all in varying degrees of ignorance, Locke is more concerned with the 'common' man - 'the

multitude' who are distinguished from men of understanding. The latter can usually apprehend religious truths by their own reasoning. He talks of,

> 'where the hand is used to the plough and the spade, the head is seldom elevated to sublime notions or exercised in mysterious reasonings'. (Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, Vol.VII p.157)

The way to bring such people to duty and obedience was by plain commands - 'the greatest part cannot know and therefore they must believe'. (Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity)
Butler appears to have more respect for the humbler members of society, for he maintains that a person who does his duty with little knowledge of why he is doing it, implies a better character than a dutiful man who has good reasons for doing his duty. He uses Christ's words in John XX[29] for illustration of his point, 'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet believed'.

However, this does not mean that Locke and Butler concluded that knowledge could be founded on revelation alone, and the former especially closely couples the two concepts,

> 'Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of Light, the Foundation of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties. Revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the

> testimony and proof it gives that they come from God.'
>
> (Locke, Essay IV. 18)

This recognition of the claims of reason was duly echoed by Butler, and one wonders how exactly he is using this term, for consider the following comments by him.

> 'I express myself with caution, lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason, which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself.'
>
> (Analogy II. 3 p.222)

and,

> 'Reason can, and it ought to judge, not only of the meaning, but also of the morality and the evidence of revelation.'
>
> (Analogy II. 3. 26. p 238)

His opinion upon this subject, I think, stems from his insistence, as we have previously seen, on examining things as they are. Reason is useful in such an exercise, it explores what is actual and extant in the scheme of things, i.e. matters of fact. Butler has not suddenly taken to speculative reasoning, but on the other hand he would be foolish to ignore what would help to clarify and verify information. Reason, therefore, not only elucidates the meaning of whatever is revealed, but it also judges the morality of Scripture, i.e. whether it contains any contradictions or inconsistencies when compared to what we experience of wisdom, justice

or goodness. For if a contradiction were proved, revelation would be false. Consider the implications of such a conflict between natural religion and what might be claimed to be part of revealed religion; where obligations and duties are demanded, the latter commands are not always the ones to follow rather than the commands of conscience. Verification is according to analogy with matters of fact, and not to the conclusions of speculative reason; and so we see that Butler's epistemology does proceed along empirical lines, for reasoning which is legitimate is that which joins 'abstract reasonings with observations of facts'. (Analogy Introduction, 9. p.11) Religion is a practical thing said Butler, and if we are to understand God's laws, we must rely upon what our daily life teaches us, for,

> 'God instructs us by experience (for it is not reason, but experience which teaches us).'
>
> (Analogy II. 5)

In view of this, the very introduction of revelation as a means of communicating information to man seems a little strange in an otherwise empiricist philosophy. Butler did admit that ideally natural religion would be sufficient guide for life, but because of man's limitations revelation is necessary to supplement our knowledge, indeed to provide that which can be obtained in no other way.

> 'As God governs the world and instructs his creatures, according to certain laws or rules, in the known course of nature: known by reason together with experience so the scripture informs

> us of a scheme of divine Providence additional to this'.
>
> (Analogy II, 3. 5. p 223)

Revealed religion also endorses the claims of natural religion, because Christianity is a republication of natural religion, its intention being to promote natural piety and virtue.

> 'It instructs mankind in the moral system of the world; that it is the work of an infinitely perfect Being and under his government; that virtue is his law; and that he will finally judge mankind in righteousness and render to all according to their works in a future state.'
>
> (Analogy II, 1. 5 p.188)

According to Butler, religion was not something separate from ethics, and indeed the importance of natural religion for this study is that it was morally orientated. This was a popular theory to hold; Voltaire wrote that he understood by natural religion those principles of morality common to the human race. This is religion used in its widest sense, a universal religion, free from sectarian dogmas, and characterized by an ultimate and common set of religious and moral beliefs. Religion was natural because it was reasonable. But Butler was very insistent that Natural Religion as he conceived it should not be defined only as

> 'a belief of the moral system of nature, and to enforce the practice of natural piety and virtue.'
>
> (Analogy II, 1)

Revelation had to be considered as a vital and essential element of religion, for together with reason it instructs us in our duties, and more than reason it shows us our destiny.

As we have seen, Butler clearly distinguishes between natural religion and Christianity. The former is an inward principle 'written upon our hearts' and 'interwoven into our very nature', it can be formulated as a natural moral law. The latter, i.e. Christianity, is an external principle, in that divine commands come from that which is outside ourselves, but the content is still moral 'for the Scriptures enjoin every moral virtue'. Natural religion is characterized by the working of reason in the interest of moral duties, and these arise out of the nature of the case itself. Christianity however, is more concerned with what Butler terms positive duties, these are revealed to us, and include such demands as baptism, full acquaintance with the Scriptures, propagation of the gospel, support of the clergy and other like precepts. Hence, revelation was nothing near 'the witness of the spirit' which was popular in the seventeenth century. In fact, Butler abhorred the religious 'enthusiasm' of former ages, and there is in evidence an account of a testy meeting between him and Wesley. Revelation is very strictly limited to the Scriptures and to the voice of conscience, its role is clearly defined. In the main, Butler believed that a man discovers his duties by following his nature; let us now examine what is meant by this injunction.

CHAPTER II

NATURE

Butler's philosophical position throughout his writings on morals appears on the surface empirical; reason discovers through the reported evidence of the senses all that man is capable of finding out, and all that he needs to discover for practical living. From introspection and observation of human nature Butler had arrived at the conclusion that to follow nature was to follow the path of virtue, whilst vice was a violation or breaking in upon our own nature. This, of course, was in direct contradiction to the rationalist position, whereby moral truths were eternal and immutable, and vice was that which was contrary to the reason and constitution of things. The area of Butler's investigation is clearly defined:

> 'what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is, which is correspondent to this whole nature.'
>
> (Sermons Preface. 7, p.6)

For Butler firmly believed that there is a more exact correspondence between the natural and moral world than would probably at first appear. The inward frame of man does in a peculiar manner answer to the external condition and circumstances of life in which he is placed; and nature, if we allow it, can guide us in the ways we should behave. And since man's nature was divinely created, God was the author of such a scheme, but does not participate.

Developing the analogy, Butler argues that just as physical nature testifies to a Great Designer, human nature testifies that he is also a Moral Governor.

> 'That God has given us a moral nature, may mostly justly be urged as a proof of our being under his moral government.'
>
> (Analogy I. 3, 17 p.76)

Butler's aim was thus to provide an empirical theory of morals in keeping with the secular tone of his age, which did not exclude the divine. He departed from the seventeenth century position of an ethics based on the arbitrary edict of God, and advanced instead an ethics based on nature. Before examining the procedure whereby Butler reaches this position, I think it necessary to look at the meaning of the word 'Nature' as it can have so many diverse senses.

Two authors have given a general analysis of the word 'Nature'. Mill in his Essay on Nature (Three Essays on Religion) forwards two ways in which the word can be used. First 'Nature' in the abstract is the sum of all phenomena, the aggregate of the powers and properties of all things. Secondly, 'Nature' stands for everything which is of itself, without voluntary human intervention, its opposite being that which is artificial. In the eighteenth century both these usages would be accepted and there was indeed a very clear distinction between art or artifice (which was derived from and made by man) and nature (which was derived from God). For example, an action that deviated from the norm such as a bitch eating her pups would be termed unnatural, but if the deviation took the form of an interference

with nature by man, for example the cutting of hair, it would be more correct to deem such action artificial. In contrast 'Nature' was sometimes used in such a way as to be the opposite of art and culture which were viewed as products of reason. Thus 'Nature' became that which was non-rational and even non-moral, becuase it was thought that not only was 'Nature' prior to reason, but that moral laws, being subject to change and diversity, were therefore deemed by some thinkers to be man-made. Needless to say, this is not the viewpoint of Butler.

Sampson in his book Progress in the Age of Reason gives three general meanings of that which is natural, and as I think these are helpful in clarifying the concept I have listed them below. First, to say that 'the inhabitants of Bali lead a more natural life than those of Chicago' is to identify nature with the primitive, the simple contrasted with the complex. Secondly, in the sentence 'things that go bump in the night are not natural', by 'natural' is indicated confirmity to observed causal sequences, in contrast to the abnormal or to the extraordinary. Thirdly, 'for a cannibal to eat a fellow man is unnatural, but for a cannibal to be eaten by a man-eating tiger is not unnatural'. Here the contention is that cannibalism is unworthy of fundamental human nature; for there is a strong sense that man is destined for better things or is meant to manifest conduct of a higher standard, and it is this sense that is present in Butler's moral theory.

To sum up, Nature, for Butler is that which God caused or permitted, and can therefore be termed that which is Good; and in regard to human nature, because we are God's creatures and born under

the natural law of virtue, man has prior obligations to piety and virtue. When Butler talks of human nature in such a way, he is referring to the whole, for although he lists that which constitutes man's internal frame, the various properties and principles, each of which may be considered separately, the reader is urged to think of human nature as a system. Butler tells us that if we think of a particular thing we find it is a whole made up of parts, but that the whole is more than the sum of the several parts, we have to include the relations and respects which these parts have to each other. In order to clarify and empahsise this conception, Butler uses a number of analogies, which include a comparison with a watch, a tree, a machine, the physical body and a civil government, but we will look only at the first and last of these. If we take a watch to pieces, unless we know how each part is related to its neighbour, we will have no idea of a watch; and this is the same with human nature, the consitituion of which Butler sees as a kind of hierarchy with some inward principles superior to others. Appetites, passions and affections could be termed the 'lower status' principles, whilst the 'higher status' principles are conscience, self-love and benevolence. To consider each of these principlse separately does not give us an idea of human nature.

> 'It is', Butler concludes, 'from considering the relations which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame have to each other, and above all the supremacy of reflection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of human nature.'
>
> (Sermons Preface, 12. p.9)

The only difference Butler sees between a watch and human nature is that, whereas a machine is inanimate and passive, men are agents, and thus are accountable for any disorder within the human constitution.

The analogy with the civil government is used because the latter implies united strength and various subordinations under one direction, i.e. of supreme authority, but the different strengths of each individual member of society do not come into the idea of the civil constitution. But if you leave out the subordination, union and common direction, you destroy and lose the idea. In a similar manner, all the various parts of our nature should be considered as related and naturally subordinate to the one principle of reflection or conscience - the latter appearing to fulfil, in Butler's theory, a unifying role.

Butler expands his psychological observations by maintaining that human nature has not 'fallen' into a systematic form by chance, there is purpose behind its design - just as there is in physical nature.

> 'Every work both of Nature and art is a system; and as every particular thing both natural and artificial is for some use and purpose out of and beyond itself, one may add to what has been already brought into the idea of a system, its conduciveness to this one or more ends.'
>
> (Sermon Preface 10.p.8)

Butler's conception of human nature exhibits what one may term our internal and external teleology, for not only does the whole exist for a purpose, that is to promote happiness and virtue, the individual propensions and affections point to the end outside themselves to which they all relate, i.e. totality of man's nature. This teleological part of Butler's moral philosophy is not to be underestimated, for everything is judged according to its conformation with the purpose for which it was intended.

> 'The due and proper use of any natural faculty or power is to be judged of by the end and design for which it was given us.'
>
> (Sermons IV, 8. p.82)

Just as the faculty of speech was given to man for communication, and the eye to see with, so man's nature was constituted to lead him to do good; and Butler justifies this conclusion in the following way:

> 'If the real nature of any creature leads him, and is adapted to such and such purposes only, or more than to any other: this is a reason to believe the Author of that nature intended it for those purposes.'
>
> (Sermon II. 1. p.51)

According to Butler's own observations, human nature exhibits a tendency to virtue over and above everything else, and therefore each individual should follow his own nature if he wishes to do that which is right in the sight of God.

From investigating the particular concept of 'Nature', we shall now procede to discuss the meaning of this phrase 'to follow nature'. By the time Butler was writing his Sermons he found it necessary to state clearly what was entailed by his use of the maxim, for it had already invited a variety of misinterpretations. He elucidates his own position by listing a number of ways in which the injunction has been used by other philosophers. First, 'to follow nature' can mean to act as we please, but Butler maintained that if this were the case then to deviate from nature would be absurd for does anyone ever act otherwise than as to be pleased? Secondly, 'to follow nature' can refer to the expression of any principle in man without regard either to the kind or degree of it. This also is regarded as being of little use as a guide in moral behaviour, in that:

> 'The same person hath often contrary principles which at the same time draw contrary ways, he may by the same actions both follow and contradict his nature in this sense of the word; he may follow one passion and contradict another.'
>
> (Sermons II, 7.p.57)

Thirdly, 'to follow nature' can mean to follow those passions which are the strongest and thus influence actions more than the others. If a man did so, Butler believed that he would be living at the level of brute existence, for man's self-expression would lie mechanically in the blind pursuit of instinctive satisfaction. This interpretation is similar to that given by Wollaston in Religion of Nature Delineated.

He maintains that some philosophers talk of man's nature as not being purely rational, there is a part of it that is in common with brutes; so that to follow nature is to appoint a guide that Wollaston feels will only mislead, for this latter brutish part of man will more often prevail over his reason. Such an argument is therefore dismissed by Wollaston as, at the best, a loose way of talk. Butler agrees with Wollaston that such a state of mind is unsatisfactory and does not deny that it ever occurs, for to talk of following nature includes all passions and emotions. For instance, both anger and love are natural, and the latter is not always the strongest impulse.

> 'The generality of mankind also obey their instincts and principlse, all of them: those propensions we call good, as well as the bad, according to the same rules; namely the constitution of their body, and the external circumstances which they are in.'
>
> (Sermons Preface 16. p.12)

What Butler does assert is that human nature consists of something more than blind passions and affections, it forms a system in which conscience is the unifying principle, and thus to follow one's nature is to express oneself according to the dictates of conscience. The principle of reflection or conscience - as it is more often termed - approves or condemns, and passes judgement upon man and his actions. In other words, it is used to distinguish between good and evil.

It is by conscience that men are a 'law unto themselves', natural law belongs to our condition of being, and according to Butler this law of our nature is the law of conscience.[1] We are obliged to obey this law, to follow our own nature, for it contains its own authority, it is our natural guide to moral behaviour. By 'natural' in this sense, Butler means that without conscious reasoning, man has an instinctive or natural disposition to kindness and compassion which is manifested in the commands of conscience. Man naturally acts out a just and good role in society, unless other passions or interests lead him astray. Thus men's obedience or deviation from conscience renders their actions natural or unnatural. In the Second Sermon Butler gives a very clear example of this point. An animal is lured into a snare by a bait, thereby bringing about his own destruction by the immediate need - hunger. By this action he is entirely following his nature and therefore there is a correspondence between his actions and nature. But if a man in a similar position rushed into the snare in order that his hunger might be appeased, he would be following his strongest desire like the animal, but there would be a great disproportion between the nature of man and such an action. According to Butler man should act not simply according to his strongest desire of the moment but reason and reflect. It is important to appreciate that Butler is not considering the action in itself or its consequence, but the comparison of the action with the nature of the agent. (We can now see more clearly the relevance of Sampson's illustration concerning cannibalism (mentioned above) to Butler's moral theory). According to Butler, the words 'disproportionate' and 'unnatural'

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[1] Butler takes as the text for Sermon II Romans II^{14,15}. It is interesting to see that Clarke also refers to this Pauline verse which was much quoted in theological circles. Butler departs from both Clarke and Paul by the inclusion of conscience as that by which men are a law to themselves.

when referred to man's nature are synonomous in meaning.

The conclusion that certain actions were worthy of man's nature and that others were not worthy followed from Butler's idea that the constitution and purpose of human nature lead men to act virtuously, in their everyday lives. However, a criticism has been made in our time by C.D. Broad, who considered that Butler referred to an ideal nature of man, not his actual nature: Broad answers the problem of how men reach such an ideal when they have only examples of imperfection before them, in the following analogical way:

> 'We see such things as cakes and biscuits and pennies. On reflection we see that they fall into a series - cake, biscuit penny - in which a certain attribute is more and more fully realized. Finally, we form the concept of a perfect circle as the ideal limit to such a series. Thus we can form the concepts of such ideal limits as circles and straight lines by reflecting upon imperfect instances arranged in series; and here there is no need to know what the objects are for.'
>
> (Five Types of Ethical Theory III p.59)

To begin from a general point of view, I find this concept unhelpful. How does one know how to order objects, unless one already has the concept of our ideal, and if this is so, then there is no need to order objects in the first place. More specifically, as an interpretation of Butler this theory of an ideal nature is inadequate on two counts. First, I can discover no evidence for such a theory in

Butler's own writings. To the contrary only consider the following words:

> 'That which renders beings capable of moral government is their having a moral nature and moral faculties of perception and of action'.
>
> (Dissertation II Of the Nature of Virtue 1. p.397)

Butler's main concern is with man's natural sense of virtue; the failure to act always morally is due to this misuse of man's own natural faculties. Everyone has an ideal nature, it is just a question of following it.

Secondly, an examination of philosophical traditions contemporary with Butler reveal a similarity of thought in which the concept of an ideal nature is quite out of place. Indeed, one suspects Broad of subjecting Butler's text to analysis in isolation, without considering his philosophical background. In my opinion there are two particular theories, current at the writing of the Sermons, which undoubtedly must have influenced Butler's thoughts. First, there was advanced what Arthur Lovejoy terms 'an ethics of prudent mediocrity'. A man's duty was to keep his place and not to transcend it, the good for a given classification of living things consisted in conformity to its type.

> 'The bliss of Man (could Pride that blessing find)
> Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
> No Pow'rs of body or of soul to share,
> But what his nature and his state can bear.'
>
> (Pope, Essay on Man Epistle I, p.42)

The discovery of what was typical of such a species as man, consisted in taking stock of his actual constitution, his desires, instincts, affections and 'in formulating his good in terms of some balanced and practicable fulfilment of these'. (Lovejoy,p.201)

The second theory with which the reader has already been acquainted in Chapter I, views all of nature as that which is, and not what could be, and to this Butler subscribes. However, the main proponents of the doctrine, Clarke and Wollaston, go further. They posit a connection between wrongness in action and falsehood or self-contradiction in theory. For Clarke, the rightness of an action consisted in its 'propriety', i.e. its suitability to the situation in which it is performed. Accordingly, he seemed to believe that certain situations call for certain kinds of acts, and to deny this, would be to deny that things are as they are.

> 'Inquiry is the very same in action as falsity or contradiction in theory.'
>
> (Clarke, A Discourse of Natural Religion in Raphael. p.208)

> 'Wherefore all rational creatures, whose wills are not constantly and regularly determined, and their actions governed, by right reason and the necessary differences of good and evil, according to the eternal and invariable rules of justice, equity, goodness and truth: but suffer themselves to be swayed by unaccountable arbitrary humours, and rash passions, by lusts, vanity and pride: by private interest, or present sensual pleasures;

> these setting up their own unreasonable self-will in opposition to the nature and reason of things, endeavour (as much as in them lies) to make things be what they are not and cannot be.'
>
> (Clarke, A Discourse of Natural Religion in Raphael. p.201)

Wollaston was of the same opinion:

> 'Whoever acts as if things were so, or not so, doth by his acts declare, that they are so or not so.'
>
> (Religion of Nature, Section I iii p.13)

For him truth was conformity to nature; if a proposition is true, it expresses things as they are, and therefore is determined and fixed by the natures of the things themselves. So, to interfere with any proposition that is true, is for Wollaston, to interfere with nature. Acts have a special significance for Wollaston, for words are but the arbitrary signs of our ideas, but facts are the effects of them, or the thoughts themselves produced into acts. Consider the following illustration: a man gives his oath to Caesar, then desserts and fights against his Emperor, and after capture he attempts to proclaim that did not deny Caesar. Wollaston's issue is that although the man may not have denied his former oath with his tongue, he most certainly did with his acts.

As we have earlier observed when discussing Butler's methodology, he refused to adopt the abstract moral reasoning of such men as Clarke and Wollaston. He preferred to think of a wrong act as a violation of man's nature, rather than something contrary to the nature and reason of things. Although Butler did not admit any logical relationship between 'what is' and rightness, he most certainly held the view of 'everything is what it is and not another thing'. (Sermons, Preface 30. p.25)

By examining the rationalist position and Butler's attitude towards it, one can begin to appreciate the conditions in which Butler formed his own doctrine. It appears to me that the whole question of whether Butler posits an ideal nature or an actual one is bound up with the problem of wrong-doing. Broad maintained that with his (Broad's) conception of nature Butler's naturalism is 'sound', but without this conception it is not. In an ideal nature conscience is supreme over self-love and benevolence, but in actual nature self-love more often than not overpowers the former. According to Broad's interpretation man aspires to his ideal nature, but Butler maintained quite definitely and clearly that man's basic natural character is virtuous, conscience always has authority, but often lacks power. By denying this, Broad is sweeping away the whole attack made by Shaftesbury (whom Butler followed in this instance) on the Hobbesian application of the word 'Nature' to man's self-centred motives. Consider Butler's conception of human nature by his given analogy with a watch. When the latter breaks down it is because the parts no longer stand in relation to each other. Both watch and human

nature, when created, started off in perfect working order: the latter never reverts to this original state, according to Butler perfection is never obtained by man. If the higher principle of reflection maintains its place and as much as it can corrects that disorder and hinders it from breaking out into action, this is all that can be expected in such a creature as man. As long as the superiority of conscience is maintained, the character is good, worthy and virtuous.

One does not know if Wollaston was familiar with this formulation, but at any rate he saw the fact of man's imperfections as an impassable obstacle to any adherence to the 'following nature' thesis. According to Wollaston to seek the perfection that religion approves of, i.e. truth, human nature cannot be urged to follow itself; for were the nature of man already perfect, the dictates of a moral religion urging him to follow his nature would be meaningless, and since it is not perfect one cannot urge man to follow it. However, as we have noted, Butler's point is that man <u>does</u> have the potential for perfect or right action, and it makes sense for man to follow nature, because more often than not he disobeys or misunderstands nature's commands.

The whole question of how man comes to behave unnaturally, i.e. viciously, or indeed whether such an idea is at all meaningful, is one that constantly concerned Butler's fellow philosophers. The weakness or vice of man could be explained by the fact that his nature is so as to be naturally wicked and weak. This was the opinion of men such as Hobbes, Mandeville and Soame Jenyns, the last for example believed that because of the imperfections of man he was incapable of ever attaining a high level of political wisdom or virtue.

'All these evils arise from the nature of things and the nature of man, and not from the weakness or wickedness of particular men or their ascendental ascendency in particular governments; the degrees of them may indeed be owing to these; but their existence is immutable.'

(Nature and Origin of Evil (1759) pp.124-126 quoted in Lovejoy Lecture VII

Clarke had a similar standpoint in his attribution of evil to a necessity inhering in the nature of things, thus its avoidance was logically inconceivable. But if the Butlerian interpretation is followed that man has fallen from his original nature, it is hard to explain how such a situation should occur when this species of being was created by God for the very purpose of practising virtue. One presumes that Butler would have agreed with Bolingbroke who said that if man has been so constituted as to follow, in every case, the ethical law of nature, the moral state of mankind would have been paradisical, but it would not have been human. (Fragments or Minutes of Essays, Section XVI (1754) Quoted in Lovejoy Lecture VII)

A number of later philosophers believed that if nature includes all that is, to say man behaves unnaturally is meaningless. Grimm, for instance, wrote:

'What devilish nonsense! What is nature? Is it not all that is? ..... How can what is be contrary to nature.'

(Correspondence Litteraries IX 1770 quoted in Crocker Age of Crisis. pp.XVII)

Whilst Adam Fergerson argued:

'Of all the terms that we employ in treating of human affairs, those of natural and unnatural are the least determinate in their meaning. Opposed to affection, forwardness, or any other defect of the temper or character the natural is an epithet of praise; but employed to specify a conduct which proceeds from the nature of man can serve to distinguish nothing; for all the actions of man are equally the result of their nature.'

(An Essay on the History of Civil Society (1793) Part I, 1, p.15)

Obviously, to recommend man to act in accordance with nature concluding that anything natural was permissible, as Fergerson pointed out. Yet in the eighteenth century there was confusion between what is right by nature and what is according to nature, as evidenced in the following quotation:

'Above all, the conclusion is not certain this comes from nature therefore this is good and

> right. We see in the human species many very bad things although it cannot be doubted that they are the work of nature..... Nature is in a state of sickness.'
>
> (An Essay on the History of Civil Society I, I)

In order that moral concepts such as 'right' and 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad' might be rendered significant, nature had to be defined in terms of virtue or goodness, but this reduction poses a further set of problems.

The difficulties are around the reduction of ethical terms to non-ethical ones which is a characteristic of naturalism and a consequence of its being an empirical theory. Naturalism and empiricism are usually the same thing, both claiming that there are rational methods of settling moral disagreement, which are empirical; admittance that moral judgements are rational does not preclude an empiricist thesis. Both doctrines presupposing a particular theory of reality, that what exists is known to us only through our senses, thereby attempt to explain the relation of ethical concepts to experience.

The re-awakened interest in ethical naturalism during the present century, which was encouraged by G.E. Moore's identification

and refutation of the naturalistic fallacy has resulted in some division amongst scholars, which the present reader may share, as to the proper application of the term 'naturalism'. R.M. Hare, attempting to clarify the issue, limits the name to those theories against which Moore's refutation is valid. He argues:

> 'that what is wrong with naturalist theories is that they leave out the prescriptive or commendatory element in value judgements, by seeking to make them derivable from statement of fact.'
>
> (Language of Morals Chpt. II. p.82)

Hare is not confining himself to all that one would call natural. Both he and Moore state that a moral theory using metaphysical or suprasensible characteristics may also commit the naturalistic fallacy. Consider the statement 'Right is what God commands', if these words are not understandable per se and inanalysable, then the proposition is naturalistic and Hare and Moore consider that it does commit the naturalistic fallacy despite its metaphysical reference. For the purposes of this study I would prefer to accept Raphael's wider definition of 'naturalism', as it bears a closer relationship to the older form of the theory as used by Butler, and so facilitates discussion concerning similarities between the two.

> 'Any theory which explains the meaning and function of ethical words wholly by reference to human nature and which denies that the facts to be taken into account include entities and characteristics transcending human thoughts, connotation and feelings. I call naturalistic not only a theory which says that ethical words describe human attitudes, but also

a theory which says that the function of such words is to express or evoke human attitudes.'

(Moral Judgement Introduction, p.9)

Naturalists therefore hold that there is no sharp division between ordinary judgements of fact and the concepts they involve, and moral judgements. There is no inanalysable idea whatever, which is peculiar to moral judgements. Non-naturalists, however hold that moral judgements form a self-contained system totally distinct from matter of fact judgements. The maturalist is not denying any kind of moral study concerning concepts such as Goodness, Duty, Obligation and so forth, merely that these are not to be treated any differently from concepts in ordinary, non-moral language. We should be careful of any distortion concerning the purpose of a naturalistic theory as P.F. Strawson pointed out 'it should not be regarded as giving a translation of ethical terms'. ("Ethical Intuitionism", Philosophy, 1949) It will not do to present a naturalistic theory as a theory of the meaning of ethical terms, for example 'abortion is wrong' means 'I disapproved of abortion'. This would be to study the logic of morals, and should not be confused with what the empiricists are trying to do; that is, account for the existence of moral concepts and judgements as they are ordinarily used. In fact, what the naturalist is talking about, is entailment, for instance, 'murder is wrong' is entailed by 'I disapprove of murder'; or to say a certain action is good is to say that this action is approved of by most people; both statements can be verified by observation.

Having now arrived at some sort of understanding of the naturalist position, we have to consider how far Butler adopted this stance and indeed whether he can be accused of committing the naturalistic fallacy. If Butler says that whatever is natural, is and must be good or that whatever is good is and must be natural, and infers from this that goodness and naturalness are one and the same quality he would indeed be committing the naturalistic fallacy. He does not say what he means by goodness. Butler comes near to this on only two occasions. First, when he says:

> 'Goodness is the natural and just object of the greatest fear to an ill man ..... goodness is a fixed steady immovable principle of action.'
>
> (Sermons Preface 25, p.18)

To take the quotation in context, Butler is disagreeing with Shaftesbury, who maintained that it was only malice and not goodness that made one afraid. Butler pointed out that only in the face of goodness will our crimes be punished and justice meted out, for goodness is uncorruptable. In the Preface Butler is telling us what goodness is, he is not identifying it with any other quality, and this point is clearly made in his following words:

> 'The goodness and badness of actions does not arise from hence, that the epithet, interested or disinterested, may be applied to them, any

> more than that any other indifferent epithet, suppose inquisitive or jealous, may or may not be applied to them; not from their being attended with present or future pleasure or pain; but from their being what they are, namely, what becomes such creatures as we are, what the state of the case requires, or the contrary.'
>
> (Sermons, Preface 33. p.25)

I think it is significant that Moore borrowed Butler's phrase "everything is what it is and not another thing", for Butler sticks rigidly to this maxim in his moral studies. It seems also significant that Butler never analyses goodness. Perhaps, like Moore, he maintained that it was incapable of definition. Butler was wishing to escape from the Hobbesian reduction of a good action to an interested action; for according to Hobbes all moral concepts were built upon the appetites and aversions of man. To say that something is good, is to say that it will lead to the gratification of a desire, for Hobbes maintained that there was no such thing as absolute goodness.

> 'Every man, for his own part, calleth that which pleaseth and is delightful to himself, good: and that evil which displeaseth him; in so much that while every man differeth from another in constitution, they differ also from one another concerning the common

distinction of good and evil.

(Human Nature, Raphael, Vol. I, p.4)

Butler was also refraining from a 'pure' naturalism, whereby, moral good and evil were reduced to a form of natural good and evil, that is pleasure and pain, as evidenced in Locke's writings.

> 'Things are good and evil, only in reference to pleasure and pain. That we call good, which is apt to cause or increase pleasure, or diminish pain in us, or else to procure or preserve us the possession of any other good or absence of any evil. And, on the contrary, we name that evil which is apt to produce or increase any pain, or diminish any pleasure in us; or else to procure us any evil, or deprive us of any good.'
>
> (Essay concerning Human Understanding II, Chpt. XX, 2, p.159)

For Butler, happiness and virtue or goodness were coincidental, the one promoted the other, but never was one defined in terms of the other. Similarly, virtue was not identified with nature. Butler realized the need for there to be something over and above the natural which was recognized as valid and binding on the individual and his natural egoistic impulses. Butler must have been only too well aware that those who talked in terms of the 'moral-sense' particularly Hutcheson, were open to the charge of relativism. If actions can be justified ultimately only by reference to feelings and desires, it follows that right and wrong are relative to feelings

and desires, whether human or divine. Thus, to say that something is good is to say that men in general approve it, so that if human nature were different, what is now right would be wrong. If a 'moral sense' theorist was faced with a society which believed that burying babies alive was 'right , to be consistent he would have no grounds for condemnation of such an action, other than that the conduct is different from his own. Hutcheson tried to answer this problem by positing that such a society had a sickly moral sense, but to say this implies that one must have some way of knowing when a moral sense is healthy or not.

> 'Must we not know therefore antecedently what is morally good or evil by our reason, before we can know that our moral sense is right.'
> (Hutcheson Illustrations. Selby-Bigg, Vol.I pp.214-215)

We will not go into the various ways in which Hutcheson tried to extricate himself from this problem, it is sufficient to say he distinguishes between what seems good and what is good.

On occasions it would appear that Butler maintains that 'good' is that of which conscience approved. Does this mean he falls into the trap of relativism? The answer is surely in the negative, for by making conscience a rational moral faculty Butler saves his theory from being based on 'feelings' alone, and thereby from the additional charge of circularity. To say that virtue lies in following human nature, is to say nothing of any value. If the self were limited to a reflection upon its actual impulses, and if it would do no more

than to realise one or the other in the presence of a suitable object, then the above charge against Butler would be correct. But the proper interpretation of conscience is one that sees it to be revelatory of standards and principles of action that make their demands upon the individual for recognition and fulfilment. The principal function of conscience is legislative, for once in possession of these guiding moral principles, the individual is able to strive for goodness and virtue by controlling his affections and desires. This is chiefly achieved through the medium of reason, and the more rational and reflective the man, the nearer he is to God. Furthermore, Butler's idea that human nature has a prior obligation to virtue and his conception of fittingness both preclude a charge of relativism, although the conclusion cannot be avoided that he is not such a thorough-going empiricist as one at first might think. In order to complete our picture of Butler as a moralist two more questions have to be studied: what is Butler's concept of conscience, and what is it that motives our moral actions?

CHAPTER III

HAPPINESS

The investigation of the eighteenth century thinkers into the constitution of human nature inevitably led them to consider what was the principal motivating force of man's actions. Such a consideration is not easy: to analyse our own emotions is often difficult and requires scrupulous honesty; whilst to investigate the motives of others is notoriously difficult and necessitates careful and unbiased observation. But this has not deterred countless moral philosophers over the ages from discussing the question. The ancient Greeks formulated the problem in terms of a supreme good, the end at which all men aimed, this being either virtue or happiness. Towards the end of the eighteenth century Kant characterized the two Greek schools of thought who were divided on this subject. "The Epicurean said, ' to be conscious that one's maxims lead to happiness is virtue'; the Stoic said, ' to be conscious of one's virtue is happiness.' In that century the debate took the form of a question 'Do we act from a wish to be virtuous?'

Any discussion of human motiviation must acknowledge two moral theories which were particularly prominent in that age. They are what we now term Psychological Egoism and Psychological Hedonism, and Butler has become well known for his refutation of the latter. Psychological Egoism is the view that man follows his own interest, whether this be pleasure, money or power. It is descriptive of mankind, and is not to be confused with Ethical Egosim which is prescriptive, that is it advances the theory that a man ought to

follow his own interest. An Ethical Egoist is concerned only with his own happiness. The second moral theory, Psychological Hedonism, is a form of Psychological Egoism, and maintains that all men's motives are reduced to a desire for pleasure. In the period with which we are concerned it is remarkably easy to confuse the two doctrines, but I think that it is true to say that most of the writers of the century were Psychological Hedonists.

The disease of the age was a continual preoccupation with self-interest manifested in an obsession with the attainment of happiness. For many happiness was the gratification of the desire for pleasure, so the moral agent was always prompted by egoistic motives. Such sentiments were certainly true of French life in that period, indeed, Hazard quotes Mme. de Puisieux as saying of her contemporaries:

> 'Happiness is a ball which we chase when it rolls
> in front of us, and kick along when it stops ....
> One must be very tired indeed to give up the
> pursuit, and let the ball run on.'
> (European Thought in the Eighteenth Century
> Chpt 2, p.27)

But in England too this game obsessed the novelists, the poets, the philosophers:

> 'Oh Happiness! Our Beings End and Aim!
> Good. Pleasure. Ease. Content. Whate'er
> thy Name!'
> (Pope, Essay on Man Epistle IV, p.71)

The ball had to be pursued as happiness was not bestowed from birth, although there grew the idea that all individuals had a natural right to happiness. It was obvious that most men desired to be happy, so that it was a simple step for eighteenth century thinkers re-examining ethics from a naturalistic and more often secular viewpoint, to maintain that happiness was the primary object of desire, the aim of all intelligent beings.

But to say that we act for our own happiness is very different from saying what it is that produces happiness. For how can one know what is happiness for a man? Is there a common sensation which can be identified as happiness? It certainly seems true from observation that people derive what they call their own happiness from different actions. X may feel happy in the presence of person A, whilst Y in the same situation is uncomfortable and irritated. On the other hand Y feels happy when rock-climbing, but X feels frightened and miserable. How then do we know that when using the term 'happiness' we are all describing the same sensation? There must be certain common features which can be discerned when one man says he is happy, and another man says he is happy.

Wollaston wrote in 1724 that "happiness must not be derived to be what it is", we must not explain away happiness in terms of something else. (The Religion of Nature, Section II, p.31). (This echoes Butler's famous assertion, everything is what it is and not another thing, and I think Butler would certainly apply this to happiness.) Wollaston also warns that "every man's happiness is his happiness, what it is to him". (The Religion of Nature Section II, p.33). A man's happiness cannot or should not be estimated by anyone else. Nevertheless, I think one can discuss what are the

possible conditions for happiness as envisaged by the writers of this period. Happiness was often allied to pleasure and the associated notions of enjoyment and liking. Hutcheson wrote that happiness denotes pleasant sensations of any kind, or a continued state of such sensations. (Illustrations upon the Moral Sense, quoted in Raphael, p.305.) According to Locke, happiness in its full extent is the utmost pleasure we are capable of:

> 'And the lowest degree of what can be called happiness, is so much ease from all pain and so much present pleasure, as without which anyone cannot be content.'
> (Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Chpt. XXI, 42, in Raphael, p.152)

Certainly it would seem that pain and pleasure are constituents of the states of unhappiness and happiness, just as gladness and joy are parts of our happiness. To quote Wollaston again, the happiness of any being cannot be that which is bad for him, neither can it be disagreeable. In proper speaking happiness always includes something positive.

> 'A sense indeed of being free from the pains and troubles is attended with happiness, but their happiness flows from the sense of the case and in a positive happiness.'
>
> (Religion of Nature, Section II, p.37)

But our perception of our happiness comes and goes, we can be happy

when painting, walking, dancing, but when not doing these things we are not unhappy, we just cease to be in a happy state; so that we can become happy and not be happy many times in our life-time. But despite this happiness is not so transient as gladness or joy, and during the eighteenth century there was much debate as to what gave men lasting happiness. Shaftsbury asked:

> 'What are those which we call pleasures or satisfactions: from whence happiness is generally computed.'

and concluded:

> 'They are (according to the common distinction) either satisfactions and pleasures of the body or of the mind.'
> (An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, Book II, Part II, Section I, Raphael, p.181)

A number of theologians, Butler included, were more concerned with mental happiness and spiritual satisfactions, rather than any short-lived pleasure or enjoyment such as bodily satisfaction. Indeed, Butler strongly condemned the fashionable way of living which he considered was to make pleasure and mirth and jollity, and to constantly hurry about after gay amusement, or some new gratification of sense or appetite.

Although he knew that the majority of men would agree that, were religion out of the case, the happiness of the present life would consist in having riches, honours, sensual gratification and wealth, yet he would argue that such acquisitions do not bring happiness, the cares and disappointments of ambition often are greater than the satisfactions.

> 'For instance, sickness and untimely death is the consequence of intemperance, though accompanied with the highest mirth and jollity.'
>
> (Analogy I, II, 12, p.56)

Such arguments are plainly good sense, Butler was confronted - as we are today to a far greater extent - with an increasingly materialistic and secular society confused in its values and consequently disturbed in thought.

The eighteenth century witnessed a reaction against the promises of a future reward and the suffering in everyday life which the Established Church apparently supported and condoned. There was a demand for happiness here and now rather than in some vague, uncertain paradise. Thus the churchmen, Butler included, found themselves in something of a quandary. They had postulated a life hereafter as a reward for virtuous behaviour, so they had to make it a pleasant and happy state, or most of its effectiveness as a sanction would be lost. However, faced with the pleasure-loving, optimistic society the theologians had to present their faith in a more attractive garb; and had to show that virtuous behaviour had some rewards in this

life too. But such a move could rule out acting morally for the sake of virtue; one would act virtuously for the sake of happiness, either in this world or in the next. Even Tindal maintained that:

> 'It can't be denied that the end for which God had implanted this religion in human nature was to make men happy here and hereafter.'
> (Christianity as Old as the Creation (1730) quoted in Cragg Reason and Authority, p.81)

We see here the influence of the Psychological Hedonists, and men like Hobbes who concentrated on rewards and punishments in this world, and reacted against the Established Church's restricting and sometimes bleak theology in the seventeenth century. Butler was much concerned over this pre-occupation with happiness, and drew attention to:

> 'the strange affection in many people of explaining away all particular affections, and representing the whole of life as nothing but one continued exercise of self-love.'
> (Sermons, Preface 29, p.21)

Of the "many people", he specifically mentions are the Epicureans, Hobbes and Rochefoucauld. Although I think Butler understood the causes behind this revolt, he did not approve or find satisfactory the solution advanced by these men. Let us briefly look at what these writers said, before considering Butler's attack on their views and his own contribution to the problem.

The Epicureans founded morality on pleasure and the avoidance of pain; our feelings of pain and pleasure are the test by which we determine what is bad and good for us. Virtue has no value on its account, but derives its value from the pleasure which accompanies it. The pleasures the Epicureans followed were those that would endure through life, they regarded spiritual and mental pleasures as far superior to those of the body. They believed that desires could be divided into those that were natural and those that were vain, the former were subdivided into necessary and unnecessary desires. The natural and necessary ones are those which are conducive to self-preservation, which bring tranquility of the mind and happiness. The Epicurean ideal was a minimizing of desires, a simple and ascetic life of quiet contentment, cheerfulness, moderation, temperance, are the best means to happiness. Yet they were not ruthless to others in their quest for pleasure, but cultivated the art of friendship on the grounds that it was pleasanter to do a kindness than to receive one.

In an attempt to answer the question "What is it that motivates our actions?" the ancient theory of the Epicureans had been revived, and men like Hobbes and Rochefoucauld developed from it a naturalistic doctrine that was also aggressive and egoistic. They all believed that disinterested action was not possible, men acted always from their own interests. Hobbes for instance asserted the following: granted that an appetite is the beginning of animal motions towards something which pleases us, <u>all</u> our motivations for actions stem from either appetites or fear:

> 'External objects cause conceptions and conceptions appetite and fear which are the first unperceived

beginnings of our actions.'

(Human Nature, Chpt.XII in Raphael. p.15)

We then either immediately follow the first appetite, or because of fear deliverate. For example, repentance is:

'the passion which proceedeth from opinion
or knowledge that the action they have done
is out of the way to the end they would attain.'
(Human Nature (1651) Chpt. IX in Raphael, p.8)

Whereas pity:

'is imagination or fiction of future calamity
to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of
another man's calamity.'
(Human Nature, Chpt. IX in Raphael, p.9)

When calamity falls on a man who has not deserved it, the compassion is greater, because the evil that may happen to an innocent man may happen to every man. Thus the individual is always pursuing his own greatest advantage which may not be in the interests of men in general, for Hobbes believed that basically man was anti-social. Conflict was bound to follow, which would no doubt prevent individuals from gratifying their desires. The solution was found in the formation of societies for the purpose of self-preservation, and certain rules were laid down that would ensure the peace necessary for each man to pursue his individual ends. Every man's obligations stemmed from the formation of the social compact; and the supreme ruler, a man, was "just" only if it was in his own interest. As we have noted in Chapter II, Hobbes

believed there was no moral difference inhering in actions, there was no such thing as absolute goodness.

Mandeville, who was a satirist and wrote the celebrated Fable of the Bees as a comment on society, followed the Hobbesian tradition. He maintained that man's social behaviour does not stem from natural altruism, but from selfish desires such as pride and self-esteem. Moral regulation is not natural to man, but is externally imposed upon him by the minority of society, the "civilisers", with the false argument that the majority would benefit.

> 'The chief thing therefore, which law givers and the other wise men, that have laboured for the establishment of society, have endeavoured, has been to make the people they were to govern, believe, that it was more beneficial for everybody to conquer than indulge his appetites, and much better to mind the public than what seemed his private interest.'
> (Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue (1714) in Raphael, p.230)

For Mandeville, the reasoning is false, because he believed that private vices promoted public benefits; in the Fable, society is pictured as a bee-hive which is prosperous so long as corruption, hypocrisy, selfishness and pride continue to be practised. Once these cease, the society disintegrates. "Virtue" is necessary to the well-being of society and therefore has to be made to pay.

The 'virtue' that men are induced to practise in Mandeville's ideal society is entirely self-centred, and this applied even to the case of a man who performs a good action in silence.

> 'The reward of a virtuous Action, which is
> the satisfaction that ensues upon it, consists
> in a certain pleasure which he procures to
> himself by contemplating on his own worth.'
> (Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue in
> Raphael p.236)

It is clear that Mandeville was drawing the ethical conclusion that 'virtue' as popularly known was closely akin to hypocrisy, and moreover was anti social. Men were to recognise their vices, rather than pretend they did not exist.

> 'Then leave complaints: Fools only strive
> To make a Great, an Honest Hive
> T'enjoy the World's Conveniences,
> Be famed in War, yet live in Ease,
> Without great Vices, is a vain
> Eutopia sealed in the Brain.
>
> Bare Virtue can't make nations live
> In splendour.....'
> (Mandeville The Fable of the Bees in Kaye p.37)

Hobbes and Mandeville both advance a very cynical view of mankind. There is no puffing up of our species, but rather we are stripped of all the hypocrisies and falsehoods with which we attempt to disguise our emotions and motives. When comparing this theory with

Butler's philosophy, the modern reader often finds that both appeal in different ways. W.H.F. Barnes comments:

> 'Read Hobbes and you admire the ingenuity he shows in exposing the entrenched egoism of the human heart, tho' from time to time a suspicion, as well as a hope, obtrudes that perhaps we are not all of us all of the time quite as egoistic as his analysis suggests. Read Butler on Hobbes and you realize that Hobbes was a very ingenious man who traded on our natural desire to be free from sentimental obfuscation and to see people as they really are.'
> (Durham University Journal, March 1951)

Yet it is most certainly true that Butler appears to have successfully quashed the Hobbesian version of Psychological Hedonism by his own explanations of man's motivations. According to Butler, the two main principles of action (excluding conscience) are self-love and benevolence, and by careful analysis of these Butler concludes that Hobbes has misinterpreted the nature of man's basic desires and inclinations. We shall thus have to examine separately Butler's concepts of self-love and benevolence and their relationship to happiness.

With reference to self-love, Butler attacks the Psychological Hedonists from two standpoints. First, he denies that men behave, in all circumstances, according to their own interest entirely.

> 'Men daily, hourly, sacrifice the greatest known interest to fance, inquisitiveness, love or hatred, any vagrant incliniation.'
> (Sermons, Preface, 35, p.26)

Indeed, this argument clearly points to one of the greatest weaknesses in the ethical egoist's philosophy. To take a modern example, the Czechoslovakian student who burns himself to death as a protest against Russian invasion does not appear to be acting for personal gain or happiness.[1]

The second and most important argument that Butler uses against the Psychological Hedonists concerns the meaning ascribed to self-love in moral discourse. Butler is convinced that what Hobbes believes is man's own interest is in fact not for man's own interest, and Butler's case revolved around his definition of self-

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[1] The Psychological Hedonist, no doubt, would posit one of the following explanations: the student may have taken pleasure in preparing himself for sacrifice; or perhaps he was escaping a far greater misery; or perhaps the way to happiness in the next life is through such an action. Even so, one cannot help concluding that the Psychological Hedonists' position on this virtue is rather weak.

love and the conditions necessary to bring happiness to a man:

> 'all this confusion might easily be avoided, by stating to ourselves where in the idea of self-love in general consists, as distinguished from all particular movements towards particular external objects. The appetites of sense, resentment, compassion, curiosity, ambition and the rest.'
> (Sermons, Preface, 29. p.22)

Butler talks at great length of the distinction between self-love and the other principles of human nature for this is the area of disagreement between him and the Psychological Hedonists. He admits that in one sense we could say that our affections and appetites can be resolved into self-love in that they are our pleasure, our pride, our ambition, but this is not to say that all we ever want is our own gratification.

Butler searches for words to express the difference between an action of revenge or friendship, by which a man runs upon certain ruin to do good or evil to another, and an action proceeding from a cool consideration of what will be to his own advantage. According to him these actions are totally different; their only similarity is that they proceed from and are done to gratify a man's inclination. To aid him in his task Butler separates cool settled selfishness, which he terms self-love, from passionate or sensual selfishness. The latter is a movement towards something external, such as honour or power, of which there is always a particular idea or perception. Self-love pursues the internal, we desire our own

interest, our happiness, and private good, and in 'the proportion a man hath this he is interested or a lover of himself'. Butler reasons that actions are named according to their objects, acts of self-love have the object of self and are therefore called interested actions; by interested Butler does not mean merely concerned with self, rather there is the implication of what is good for self is self-love. Particular affections, or what is the same thing actions proceeding from passionate selfishness, are not to our own interest in the long run; they tend toward particular external objects and are therefore disinterested. To clarify the distinction between the two kinds of actions, let us consider the following example. If you advise another person to invest money in an undertaking from which you hope to make a profit, is this disinterested advice? Butler would argue that you are acting from greed or ambition distinct from self-love as he defines it, clearly his notion of what is an interested action must proceed from his particular definition of self-love.

It is interesting that Butler maintains that all principles and affections which are distinct from self-love are equally distinct. The desire for revenge and the desire for the preservation of a friend have the same respect to self-love.

> 'The object of self-love is expressed in the term self and every appetite of sense and every particular affection of the heart, are equally interested or disinterested because the objects of them all are equally self or somewhat else.'
>
> (Sermon XI, 10, p.195)

I think Butler is saying something very simple here concerning the relationship of the particular affections and self-love. Revenge is interested because it is alone for the gratification of self, disinterested because it is not for the welfare of self. Butler is making no moral judgements in this issue, the criterion of good and evil is not whether an action is interested or disinterested. The goodness or badness of actions arises,

> 'not from their being attended with present or future pleasure or pain, but from their being what they are; namely, what becomes such creatures as we are, what the state of the case requires, or the contrary.'
>
> (Sermons, Preface, 33 p.25)

Despite these careful distinctions, Butler does not deny that it is sometimes very difficult to calculate whether we act from the principle of self-love or some particular passion, because the two may often be joined together. But he still insists that,

> 'we distinctly discern what one is, and what is the other, though we may be uncertain how far one or the other influences us.'
>
> (Sermons, Preface, 30, p.23)

And thus he maintains that it is absurd to say that mankind is wholly activated by either, both are present and both have their influence in varying strengths in various men.

Let us look a little closer at the operation of these

principles of nature as observed by Butler. An interested pursuit necessarily presupposes particular passions or appetites.

> 'The very idea of interest or happiness consists in this, that an appetite or affection enjoys its object.'
>
> (Sermon XI, 6, p.190)

We find delight in eating an apple, because we desire the object, and gain satisfaction from eating it; we cannot enjoy eating an apple without the apple. It is interesting to note the difference between Hobbes and Butler on this point. Hobbes, as a materialist, perhaps cannot be termed a Psychological Hedonist in the strictest sense of the word. (Although, in the main, I have classed him as such for the purposes of this study.) A Psychological Hedonist would hold that the motivating force of my action is the prospect of pleasure, but Hobbes does not clearly separate the thinking of the pleasures you may get in drinking wine, from the pleasure you get from so thinking. As far as Butler is concerned the pleasure that comes from eating an apple and the passion of hunger is what motivates us to eat. It thus almost seems as if Butler is more the Psychological Hedonist here than Hobbes, and indeed, there are a number of passages in Butler's work that at first sight appear to support this opinion. For example:

> 'It is manifest that nothing can be of consequence to mankind or any creature, but happiness.'
>
> (Sermon XII, 20, p.224)

> 'When we sit down in a cool hour we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness or at least not contrary to it.'
>
> (Sermon XI, 21, p.206)

What exactly is Butler saying here? If we ask for justification of why we should act virtuously, would his answer be 'for the sake of happiness'? If this were so, then he would certainly be undermining the authority of conscience (as well as losing the immediacy of conscience), for self-love would be enthroned over that moral faculty.

Certainly, Butler does not in any way reduce the importance of happiness in the present world. It is natural that men seek their own happiness, and to expect a man to disregard wholly this desire would be unreasonable, in the sense that it would be against the strongest impulses of the man's own nature. But to advance the maxim 'follow only your own happiness' is fraught with difficulties. First, although we may want to keep our obligations, our sense that we ought to keep them is somewhat lessened. It was Richard Price who recognised this fact, when he stated that to define obligation as the necessity of doing a thing in order to be happy, would make ridiculous the statement that a man is obliged to study his own happiness. Secondly, as Butler very firmly contends, happiness does not consist entirely in self-love, for people can love themselves with 'the most entire and unbounded affection and yet be extremely

miserable'. (Sermon XI, 6, p.190.) The maxim 'the more you have the more you want' is a very true one, and to indulge oneself does not always make for happiness. Happiness consists in the gratification of particular passions, which supposes that we have those passions, and that,

> 'If self-love wholly engrosses us and leaves no room for any other principle, there can be absolutely no such thing at all as happiness or enjoyment of any kind whatever.'
>
> (Sermon XI, 6, p.190)

Butler stresses that 'disengagement is absolutely necessary to enjoyment', and he gives the example of over-fondness for a child which is not to its advantage (Sermon XI). Happiness is not obtained by thinking about happiness itself, but by

> 'enjoyment of those objects which are by nature suited to our several particular appetites, passions and affections.'
>
> (Sermon XI, 6, p.190)

This relationship between the pursuit of happiness and the pursuit of objects requires brief investigation. If part of happiness lies in the enjoyment of certain objects, then in a world where there may not be enough to go around, competition has to exist; would Butler condone this? Some idea of the value placed on the pursuit of objects in Butler's philosophy is given in Sermon XI. There Butler supposes a man to contemplate how he could attain his

own greatest happiness, the solution, the man believes, lies in those particular enjoyments such as riches, honours and gratification of sensual appetites; but Butler concludes thus:

> 'yet non profess themselves so completely happy in these enjoyments, but that there is room left in the mind for others, if they were presented to them: nay, these, as much as they engage us, are not thought so high, but that, human nature is capable even of greater.'
>
> (Sermon XI, 13, p.199)

The distinction Butler makes when advocating the way to happiness, is between lives where object-getting is important, and those where it is not; he recommends the latter to his readers.

Self-love never seeks anything for the sake of the thing itself, but only as a means of happiness or good. What saves Butler's theory from degenerating into Psychological Hedonism is not only the explanation of happiness in terms of virtue, a point we have yet to discuss fully, but his particular definition of self-love and the role of reason. For when the principle of cool self-love is at work it is a sign of a reasonable man, 'a sensible creature' who can reflect upon himself and his own interest. Suppose,

> 'one man rushes upon desire: nobody will call the principle of this action self-love.'

But

> 'suppose another man to go through some laborious work upon promise of a great reward, without any distinct knowledge what the reward will be, this course of action cannot be ascribed to any particular passion.'
>
> (Sermons I, Note to 6, p.39)

Cool self-love is not impulsive action. As a motivating principle it conforms to the law of fittingness; that is to say if passions prevail over self-love, the consequent action is unnatural: but if self-love prevails over passions the action is natural. Thus there is no reason to wish that self-love was any weaker in the world, but rather that there was more of it. Indeed, if the principle of self-love alone, were adopted by man, in the sense that they sat down and considered what was the greatest happiness they could attain for themselves in this world 'it would manifestly prevent numberless follies and vices'. This resembles what the Epicureans advocated and although such a life would be by no means moral or religious according to Butler, he does not deny that it would be 'less mischievous than the extravagances of mere appetite, will and pleasure'. According to Butler, we are meant to take care of our own life and health, private good and happiness.

Our discussion of benevolence, the second motivating principle of action will fall under two headings: the first will consider its claims to existence, and the relation it bears to happiness. Butler was most concerned to explain the presence of benevelonce within men in order to give a decisive refutation of Hobbes and his

followers, who were convinced that there was no such thing as benevolence in the sense that benevolence was usually defined.

> 'There can be no greater argument to a man of his own power, than to find himself able not only to accomplish his own desires but to assist other men in theirs: and this is that conception wherein consisteth charity.'
> (Hobbes Human Nature, Chpt. IX, in Raphael p.12)

Butler's contention that delight of power can be served by cruelty just as much as by goodwill, would hardly touch his opponents, who held anyway that there was no distinction between the two. Instead, the main defence of benevolence turned on his conviction that its existence was a matter of fact most plainly proved. Indeed, the very constitution of man lead him to promote the happiness of all men. Butler illustrates this by drawing the analogy between the relation which several parts of the body have to each other and to the whole body, with the relation that each particular individual in society has to other particular persons and to the whole society. So that men are intended to do good to others, just as the several members of the natural body were intended to be instruments of good to each other and to the whole body. One of Butler's primary premises is that there is a natural principle of attraction in man towards man. We are by nature and design social animals, whilst the seeds of benevolence were implanted within man by God. It is because of these characteristics that men manufacture relationships

to hold together small fraternities and partnerships. These ties are more than merely the occasions 'upon which our nature carries us on according to its own previous bent and bias'.

In support of this theory, Butler gives a number of practical instances which illustrate benevolence in the behaviour of men. An individual rejoices in the well-being or advancement of a fellow-being, even though he has no share it it; or to give another example,

> 'Is there not often the appearance of men's distinguishing between two or more persons, preferring one before another, to do good to, in cases where love of power cannot in the least account for the distinction and preference?'
>
> (Sermon I, note, p.35)

In both these cases there is exhibited a feeling whose presence cannot be accounted for by narrow self-love. Moreover, Butler was not alone in his assertion that our actions were not all narrowly egoistic, those philosophers who had believed in a moral sense, had held a similar opinion. Shaftesbury, for instance, was puzzled as to why men like Hobbes revealed to the rest of mankind the fact that only private interest governs men's motives, when such a disclosure is against their own personal interest. He concluded that such general scepticism was pursued only in order to

> 'deal with the dogmatical spirit which prevails in some particular subjects. And when they have accustomed men to bear contradiction in the main and hear the nature of things disputed

> at large; it may be safer they conclude to argue separately, upon certain nice points in which they are not altogether so well satisfied.'
> (Shaftesbury, An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour, 1709, in Monro, p.95)

Having cast doubts upon the very intentions of these 'Gentlemen' cynics, Shaftesbury states that for a man to be virtuous, he must act in accordance with what is best for the system of which he is a part. An individual

> 'only is supposed Good, when the good or ill of the System to which he has relation is the immediate object of some Passion or Affection moving him.'
> (An Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit, Book I, Part II, 1, in Raphael, p.172)

So that virtue consists in acting not only for one's own interests but for the interests of society, to be concerned for the welfare of others and to promote their good. Conflict does not occur between public and private virtue, because it is to the individual's own interest to work for others. To do so is not only a necessary criterion of virtue, it is the only way to happiness:

> 'Thus the wisdom of what rules, and is First and Chief in nature, has made it to be according to the private interest and good of every one, to work towards the general good, which if a creature ceases to promote, he is actually wanting

> so far to himself, and ceases to promote his own happiness and welfare.'
>
> (An Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit, Book II, Part II, Conclusion, in Raphael, p.188)

Hutcheson carried on the work of Shaftesbury and made it his main concern to show that we admire and do actions for other reasons than a regard for our own interest.

> 'The intention of Moral Philosophy is to direct men to that course of action which tends most effectually to promote their greatest happiness and perfection.'
>
> (System of Moral Philosophy, 1755 initio)

Hutcheson, however, goes further than his predecessor in maintaining that all virtue presupposes affection and disposition to promote public good, and that the degree of virtue depends on the quantity of happiness expected to result and on the number of persons affected:

> '..... that in equal degrees of happiness, expected to proceed from the action, the virtue is in proportion to the number of persons to whom the happiness shall extend.... and in equal numbers, the virtue is as the quantity of the happiness,or natural good, or that the virtue is in a compound ratio of the quantity of good and the number of enjoyers.'
>
> (An Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, Section III, in Raphael, p.283)

The above passage is interesting in a general philosophical way: as Raphael points out, it is an early explicit formulation of the Utilitarian dectrine. But for the purposes of our own study it puts clearly a particular interpretation of benevolence that Butler discards. Hutcheson ascribes a superior position to benevolence in human nature; he reduces all virtue to benevolence; and explains benelovence solely in terms of happiness. These are characteristics he shares with Shaftesbury, but they are also theories which have been attributed to Butler by critics in past centuries.

Let us first take the relationship between benevolence and virtue. It is fair to say that Butler is a little misleading at first sight on this question, principally because in one of his Sermons he does seem to assert that all common virtues and vices can be traced to benevolence or to the lack of it.

> 'From hence it is manifest that the common virtues, and the common vices of mankind, may be traced up to benevolence, or the want of it.'
>
> (Sermon XII, 22, p.226)

The reader must beware of taking such words out of the general context of Butler's moral theory. It is to be remembered that this quotation occurs within a Sermon on 'The Love of our Neighbour', and Butler is raising the principle of benevolence to the same level as that of self-interest in order to persuade his congregation to be concerned for the welfare of others. Note also that Butler is talking of common vices, such as habitual excess, a dissolute course of life, wrong-doings that affect others not just ourselves; he has already

dealt with individual vice in a previous sermon. There are, in fact, a number of instances where Butler talks of self-love and benevolence as being 'the two general affections' which 'denominates men's character as to virtue'. (Sermon XII, 8 p.216.) Indeed, the illustrations he gives throughout his works concerning the relations of parts to the whole, and the promoting of virtue by the inter-relating of self-love and benevolence all clearly point to the equality of these two principles, but not to their identity.

> 'I must however remind you that though benevelonce and self-love are different; though the former tends most directly to public good, and the latter to private: yet they are so perfectly coincident, that the greatest satisfactions to ourselves depend upon our having benevolence in a due degree, and that self-love is one chief security of our right behaviour towards society.'
>
> (Sermon I, 5, p.38)

Perhaps the final proof lies in the 'Dissertation upon Virtue', where he seems to deny categorically that benevolence is the sum of all virtue.

> 'Without inquiring how far, and in what sense, virtue is resolvable into benev-olence, and vice into the want of it; it may be proper to observe, that benevolence and the want of it, singly considered, are

in no sort the whole of virtue and vice.'

(Dissertation II, Section 12, p.407)

Upon reading this passage we either conclude that Butler has simply contradicted what he asserts in Sermon XII, or that readers have misinterpreted the meaning of the latter. As Butler was such a careful and almost pedantic writer, I do not think he would have made such a gross contradiction: besides as the Dissertation on Virtue should rightly appear in his later work, the Analogy, one tends to think of anything there as his final words - written upon reflection.

Hence, while Butler agreed with these two predecessors of his, that disinterested benevolence constituted a specific attribute of the moral man, he clearly limited its role, perhaps because he saw the dangers of claiming virtue to be the result of actions, which were in turn deduced to be prompted merely by motives of happiness. If the maxim of generalised benevolence alone is followed, then the man would be approved, who took from another the fruit of his labour by fraud or violence with the intent to give it to a third, who he thought would have as much pleasure from it. It is partly against such injustice that Butler spoke so sharply in the passage below.

'Some authors of great and distinguished merit have, I think, expressed themselves in a manner which may occasion some danger, to careless readers, of imagining the whole of virtue to consist in singly aiming, according to the best

> of their judgement, at promoting the happiness of mankind in their present state; and the whole of vice in doing what they foresee, or might foresee, is likely to produce an overbalance of unhappiness in it; than which mistakes none can be conceived more terrible.'
>
> (Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue, Section 15, p.409)

This does not mean that Butler underestimated the power of benevolence as a principle of action, but he did not consider it purely as a means for maximising the happiness of humanity. He frequently mentions goodness as being an essential part of benevolence.

> 'Benevolence seems in the strictest sense to include in it all that is good and worthy.'
>
> (Sermons XII, 22, p.227)

And in order to distinguish which actions are likely to produce the greatest good, reason and reflection have been given to assist us.

> 'Thus, when benevolence is said to be the sum of virtue, it is not spoken of as a blind propension, but as a principle in reasonable creatures, and so to be directed by their reason.'
>
> (Sermon XII, 19, p.223)

Our aim therefore, is not to promote happiness by any means, but to pursue goodness which will naturally result in happiness.

'A benevolent man will be easy and kind to his dependents, compassionate to the poor and distressed, friendly to all with whom he has to do.'

(Sermons XII, 14, p.221)

All that has been said is of course only my interpretation of Butler, and there are some philosophers who still maintain that he recommends utilitarianism especially regarding obligation. Certainly, Butler was no exception in the popular belief of his day that every individual had a right to happiness.

'It is manifest that nothing can be of consequence to mankind or any creature but happiness. This then is all which any person can in strictness of speaking, be said to have a right to.'

(Sermon XII, 20, p.224)

There are two ways in which the term 'right' can be used; first, in the sense that telling the truth is right (that is, not wrong) and secondly, in the sense that it is right for promises to be kept, right implies obligation. Not only would Butler say that it was not wrong to pursue happiness, but in fact it was our duty to so do to others as well as to ourselves. To go back to a metaphor used before - the happiness ball had to be passed around all the players in the game. We thus owe no man anything

but only the promotion of his happiness, this is our sole obligation; such views appear dangerously near the popular doctrine formulated by John Gay when he wrote of obligatory acts being those which lead to happiness.

In fact, Butler does not agree with the above view, and the reason why this is so plays an important part in his philosophy. Butler asserts that because it is so difficult for us as mere mortals, to know where our true interest lies, the way most likely to bring our happiness is the path of virtue along which conscience guides us. In order to understand fully this relationship between virtue and happiness, let us study how these two concepts fit into God's total scheme as envisaged by Butler.

When discussing Butler's moral philosophy it is important to remember that he begins from certain theological premises; and this is particularly the case with virtue and happiness. We do not just exist in this world, we are under the moral government of God. The relation between God and man is likened to that of a civil magistrate over his subjects, or a master over his servants; and as we have already realized this fact is for Butler, not so much a deduction of reason as a matter of experience. From observing the course of nature Butler has concluded that virtue and vice are naturally rewarded and punished, and that the pleasure and pain attached to voluntary actions demonstrate that God is a natural governor

of the world.[2] He gives us an example of this disciplinary process, the oain we should feel upon closely approaching a fire; Butler asserts that the pain inflicted on us as a punishment for going too near the fire is as much an indication of God's government of us as would be an explicit instruction and warning from heaven.

It does not seem to me that Butler has in mind so anthropomorphic a deity as this example suggests at first sight. To be burnt by fire is a natural process: that is, a process which has not been contrived by man; for it is an undeniable fact that flesh will be burnt by fire and pain will follow, and man cannot prevent this sequence of cause and effect. However, there are several ways of viewing this process. If we ask what is the moral criterion for deciding which classes of action are to be punished, we could say simply that those actions which lead to physical harm and injury are punished. Or one could say that God dislikes our going near the fire, and punishes us for so doing, which would be to envisage a kind of Old Testament God. But, Butler is saying that we learn from natural examples that some actions bring pain and harm, that others bring pleasure and reward, and he maintains that this natural system proclaims the workings of God, because he holds that God was author and creator of all things. Butler believed that the infliction of pain and

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[2] The pain and pleasure argument does not assert that God exists, that is not taken as <u>proof</u> of his existence.

suffering is not random, but purposine, its aim being to lead man to avoid misery and incline towards pleasure and happiness. And this built-in system of rewards and punishments is supported by man's nature, which is so constituted that he wishes more for happiness than suffering. Indeed, Butler firmly states:

> 'that God has given us a moral nature, may most justly be urged as a proof of our being under his moral government.'
>
> (Analogy, Chpt III, 17, p.76)

He provides evidence for his first point of view in his Sermons, and attempts to bring evidence for his second in the Analogy.

It is necessary to note that Butler does not make the mistake of thinking that natural government proves moral government. The latter is not merely a matter of rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked, 'in rendering to men according to their actions, considered as good or evil'. According to Butler, some sort of government is plainly implied by the following facts: that God governs the world by general fixed laws; and that God has given man capacities for reflecting upon the constitution of things, and foreseeing the good and bad consequences of his own behaviour.

God is more deity of desserts than a Utiliterian God; Butler doubts whether divine goodness is a bare single disposition to produce happiness, rather it is a disposition to make the good, the faithful, the honest man happy. I therefore think

that Raphael is misinterpreting Butler, when he says that Butler's God may well be concerned only with the production of the maximum possible amount of happiness. Butler emphasises that particular actions are not especially meritorious, it is the virtuous character that is rewarded and attended by happiness.

The reason for this stressing of virtuous behaviour, is our ignorance of the ways of the universe. The end for which man aims is 'virtuous happiness' which can only be achieved with certainty by obeying God, who 'speaks' through conscience. Butler surmises that the end for which God made the world is beyond the reach of our faculties and furthermore that,

> 'it must be owned a thing of difficulty to weigh and balance pleasures and uneasinesses each among themselves, and also agains each other, so as to make an estimate with any exactness, of the overplus of happiness on the side of virtue.'
>
> (Analogy, Part I, III, 5, p. 67; this point can also be found in Part II, VI, 3, and Part II, VIII, 9)

Happiness is not always coincident with virtue in this life, for as Butler remarks even those persons who lead blameless lives from their youth may not be happy; so one may say that virtue is not a sufficient condition of happiness. Whilst men of vice may not be unhappy,

> 'a person with his passions inflamed, his natural faculty of self-government impaired by habits of indulgence, and with all his vices about him like so many harpies, craving for their accustomed gratification: who can say how long it might be, before such a person would find more satisfaction in the reasonableness and present good consequences of virtue, than difficulties and self-denial in the restraints of it.'
>
> (Analogy, Part I, III, 6 p.67)

So virtue seems also not a necessary condition of happiness. One can be happy without being virtuous, but would Butler call this true lasting happiness for he believes that the latter could be gained only by virtuous behaviour. The situation reminds the modern reader of Flew's 'no true Scotsman' fallacy. Suppose a man says 'no true Scotsman ever beats his wife', and then you show him a newspaper cutting which reports that a Scotsman, McTaggart, has beaten his wife and been sent to gaol. If the man replied that McTaggart wasn't a true Scotsman, he would be implying that to never beat their wives is a necessary condition of being a true Scotsman. Unless Butler shows what he means by long lasting happiness, defining it separately from virtue then any statement about a relationship between the two must be purely analytical and thereby not meaningful.

I think Butler would state his position on this difficulty in the following way. Men act virtuously, because they are secure in the knowledge that they are obeying God and so will be rewarded ultimately; but when men act viciously any happiness so derived will be very insecure, and punishment will be the eventual outcome. As an additional sanction there will be a better chance of happiness by acting virtuously because, - and this is Butler's main point against the above argument - it is obeying our nature to so do. To act viciously is to go against our nature, becuase we have a prior suitableness to virtue. Hence 'virtue is demonstrably the happiness of man'. (Sermon XV, 15 p.273)

Why do we have to make a choice between virtue and vice? If we lived in a world where men found themselves from their birth to their death in their natural capacity, in a settled state of contentment and happiness without any effort on their part, then there would be no incentive to behave in a certain way. Indeed, it would be meaningless to say that our future interest depends upon our present behaviour which requires self-government, for the universe and its creator would be purely mechanistic. Without moral freedom Butler's elaborate system of punishments and rewards disintegrates; men need the opportunity to show God that they can act virtuously. Thought and consideration, the denying of ourselves things we desire and the regulation of behaviour in a manner we may not always like, is necessary if we are to pass with any satisfaction through the present world and be received upon any tolerable good terms in it. One could add Russell's maxim here, that to be without some of the things you want is an

indispensible part of happiness. (The Conquest of Happiness) I think therefore that George Watson is right when he says that Butler believed that happiness was more like an escalator than a pedestal. (The English Mind; edited by H.S. Davis & G. Watson) For only consider the following words:

> 'Whoever will in the least attend to the thing, will see that it is the gaining, not the having of it, which is the entertainment of the mind.'
>
> (Butler, Sermon XV, 13, p.270)

CHAPTER IV

CONSCIENCE

Within the field of morals Butler states how impossible it is that the same words always stand for the same ideas, even in the same author (Sermons, Preface, 3, p.3). 'Conscience' is a good example of this ambiguity, it is a complex moral faculty, and was known in the eighteenth century by many names, "moral sense", "moral reason", "Divine Reason" and so on. For instance, Hutcheson wished to prove

> 'That some actions have to man an immediate goodness; or, that by a superior sense, which I call a moral one, we approve the actions of others, and perceive them to be their perfection and dignity, and are determined to love the agent; a like perception we have in reflecting on such actions of our own, without any view of natural advantage from them.'
> (An Inquiry Concerning Moral Good and Evil, Introduction, in Raphael, p. 263)

Clarke emphasises the rational part of conscience. For men to allow themselves to be swayed by 'unaccountable arbitrary humours', 'rash passions', and 'private interest'

> 'is acting contrary to that understanding, reason and judgement, which God has implanted in their natures on purpose to

> enable them to discern the difference
> between good and evil.'
> (A Discourse on Natural Religion, 3, in
> Raphael, p.201)

The existence of some sort of moral perception was never doubted; the controversy arose as to its constitution. The difficulties in the works of Butler, relating to this subject appear to be that he never gives a clear satisfactory definition, and this has led to commentators' positing somewhat confused interpretations of conscience. Raphael, who maintained that Butler's description of the working of conscience is unsurpassed, suggests that no clear definition was given, because at the time of writing the Sermons, the controversy about sense and reason had not begun. Butler would thus consider that no-one would be in any doubt as to what he meant by conscience; and indeed I maintain that if the Analogy and the Sermons are looked at together an intelligible general idea of conscience may be apprehended.

Butler maintains that all individuals experience through introspection the workings of a moral faculty. We can also observe the process in others, and indeed we pass judgement on their actions as well as our own, using moral vocabulary such as 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong', which presuppose that we have approved or disapproved of certain behaviour. Our sense of gratitude, the distinction we make

between deliberate injury and accidental harm, and between injury and punishment: all these, Butler states, are reasons for thinking that there is a moral faculty present in our nature. He further reminds us that there are many learned works on the subject of morals and

> 'it cannot be imagined that all these authors, throughout all those treatises had absolutely no meaning at all to their words, or a meaning metely chimerical.'
>
> (Dissertation Upon Virtue, 2, p.398)

As Butler's method of study was empirical, he would not rely upon a priori reasoning as evidence for the existence of conscience. In the First Sermon he defends the presence of benevolence in man's nature by appealing to man's own observations, men need only look at themselves and others, and they will see the principle of benevolence at work:

> 'Whether man be thus, or otherwise constituted, what is the inward frame in this particular, is a mere question of fact or natural history, not provable immediately by reason. It is therefore to be judged of and determined in the same way as other facts or matters of natural history are; by appealing to the external senses or

inward perceptions.'

(Sermon I, note p.37)

There is every reason to suppose that conscience is viewed in a similar manner, for in the same sermon Butler puts forward an illustration of the existence of conscience, which he strongly maintains cannot possibly be denied. Suppose a man helps another who is in great distress, and a short time afterwards the same man in a fit of temper injures an innocent person who had been a friend and to whom he owed an obligation (Sermon I, 8, p.42). Butler stated that the man who had done these two different actions, on coolly reflecting upon them afterwards, would not feel affected by both in the same way. He would approved of one and condemn the other, thereby exercising moral judgement, and

'this principle in man, by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper and actions, is conscience'.

(Sermon I, 8 p.42)

On first sight this explanation of conscience seems adequate, however examination of the Dissertation Upon Virtue reveals a certain confusion. Butler talks there of conscience:

'whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding or as a perception of the heart, or which seems to be the

truth as including both.'[1]

(2, p.398)

Conscience is thus partly intellectual and partly emotional, and it is this inclusion of both reason and feeling within the concept of conscience that has raised various difficulties with succeeding generations of scholars. When attempting to elucidate the meaning of conscience in the writings of Butler, I think it is important to keep in mind E.M. Forster's well-known epigraph to Howards End 'only connect'. As we have seen, Butler maintains that man's inward nature is made up of several parts, and he warns us that to have an idea of such a constitution necessitates an understanding of the relations between these various parts. Hence, the first special connection we shall discuss is that between reason, reflection and the moral faculty.

Confusion appears to have arisen because of the seeming identification of these three concepts; reflection is reason and reason is the same as conscience. Throughout the Sermons Butler calls conscience 'a principle of reflection' and talks of 'reflex approbation or disapprobation', apparently taking it for granted that the reader understands what is meant by reflection. In the eighteenth century this would probably be

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[1] He also says in Sermon X that conscience 'our understanding and sense of good or evil'. (12 p.178)

the case, and it would therefore be helpful to look at writers more or less contemporary with Butler. Locke, for example, who had a certain amount of influence upon Butler, talks of all ideas coming from sensation or reflection.

> 'Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience. In that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking'.
> (An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book II, Chpt.I, 2, pp.89-90)

Thus, ideas of reflection are formed as a result of reflection, and as Hutcheson so rightly interpreted Locke, by reflection is meant an inward power of perception or internal sensation. Shaftesbury, on the other hand, talks of a reflecting faculty which approves of moral qualities. Conscience was for man

> 'to have the reflection in his mind of any unjust action or behaviour, which he knows to be naturally odious or ill-deserving.'
> (Inquiry Concerning Virtue, Bk.II, Part II, 1, in Raphael, p.185)

Butler took the opportunity to say what he meant by reflection in his discussion of the future life. He considered that men exist in two states of life and perception, that of sensation and that of reflection; and that the latter is probably not destroyed by death, for sensation is not essential to reflection once ideas are gained. Butler continues by talking of men with mortal diseases which do not harm their reflecting powers; even to just before death, these men

> 'discover, apprehension, memory, reason, all entire; with the utmost force of affection; sense of a character, of shame and honour; and the highest mental enjoyments and sufferings even to the last gasp.'
>
> (Analogy, Part I, Chpt I, 25, p.41)

It thus would appear that by reflection, Locke, Shaftesbury and Butler are referring to a process of fixing one's thoughts upon internal matters such as memory, apprehension and so forth. Conscience is what Butler calls a 'particular kind of reflection,' and this involves a process in which reason is used, but there is no simple equivalence between reason, reflection and conscience.

Let us now turn to the connection between reason and feeling: for this it will be useful to study D.D. Raphael's explanation of the definition of conscience given in the Dissertation Upon Virtue. Basing his assertions on close

knowledge of eighteenth century terminology, Raphael concludes that the phrase 'a sentiment of the understanding' refers to a rational judgement. His opinion is substantiated by Thomas Reid who speaks of the popular abuse of the word 'sentiment' as feeling

> 'For the word 'sentiment' in the English language, never as I conceive, signifies, mere feeling but judgement accompanies with feeling. It was wont to signify opinion or judgement of any kind, but of late, is appropriated to signify an opinion or judgement that strikes and produces some agreeable or uneasy emotion.'
> (Essays on the Active Powers of Man V, 7, quoted in Raphael, Moral Judgement p.153)

From all this, Reid concluded that moral determinations may be rightly termed moral sentiments. Accordingly, Raphael maintains that in the other phrase 'perception of the heart' Butler by perception, means something analogous to the perception of sense, and when referring to the 'heart' he is meaning perception by the inner sense, as distinguished from the external senses. By the 'perception of the heart' we discern right and wrong, good and evil; by the means of reason a moral judgement is then made. The cognitive and moral aspects of conscience are clearly defined for

> 'Reason alone, whatever any one may wish, is not in reality a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man, but this reason joined with those affections which God has impressed upon his heart, and when these are allowed scope to exercise themselves, but under strict government and direction of reason, then it is we act suitably to our nature and to the circumstances God has placed us in.'
>
> (Sermon V, 4, p.98)

We have thus discovered that within the moral faculty two procedures can be discerned, which nevertheless are essentially related. The rationality of conscience is empirical and particularistic, it is concerned with the motives and actions of men in concrete situations: but as a moral activity, it is meaningless unless a reference to moral worth is included. For conscience not only notes the causes and consequences of actions, it pronounces them good or bad. The exact nature of this procedure by which we award approval is still a little obscure. Are we perceiving by means of a feeling, that is do we have a certain feeling of approval that always accompanies a good action? Or is the object of our perception the feeling itself. According to Butler, we come to 'know' immediately what is good, we have a moral intuition, which is very different from having a clear knowledge

of what we have come to know.

> 'In all common ordinary cases we
> see intuitively at first view what is
> our duty, what is the honest part.'
> (Sermon VII, 14, p.132)

Certainly, it would be very unsatisfactory to view conscience as no more than a moral sense, as Hutcheson did. The faculty that has the function of choosing between feelings cannot be a feeling itself, for if it were merely a desire alongside the other desires there would be no good reason why it should take precedence over the others. If you follow the maxim "I ought to do x because I have a feeling I ought to do x', confusion may follow, not only with how you formulate conflicts, but also how you resolve them, when obligation is derived from only a feeling.

It is because I maintain that Butler's use of the term 'conscience' involves both a rational and intuitional meaning, that I find difficulty in accepting Raphael's 'double-aspect theory', which he forwards in his paper 'Bishop Butler's view of Conscience'. (Philosophy 1949 Vol. XXIV) Raphael postulates that there are two faculties which may judge matters of morality: speculative reason, which perceives the fitness and unfitness of actions; and conscience which perceives the rightness of particular actions. Part of the evidence for his theory is that it bears out Butler's original statement that a priori and empirical methods of

treating morals lead us to the same conclusions (Sermons, Preface 7, p.5). There are two points we may make at once concerning this passage. First, one may distinguish between how ethical arguments are conducted, and how a man deduces his duties. It seems to me that in the Preface Butler is concerned only with the former. Secondly, I think that both methods of dealing with morals would appeal to the relation of 'fittingness', and this concept is not to be limited to speculative reason.

'Fitness' was a popular eighteenth century term used by a number of theologians and philosophers. For instance, Tindal wrote:

> 'His (God's) commands are to be measured by the antecedent Fitness of Things.'
> (Christianity Old as Creation 1730)

Whilst Clarke talked of there being

> 'a fitness or suitableness of certain circumstances to certain persons, and an unsuitableness of others.'
> (A Discourse of Natural Religion I, in Raphael, p.192)

As Richard Price explained:

> 'Fitness and unfitness most frequently denote the congruity or incongruity,

> aptitude or inaptitude of any means
> to accomplish an end. But when applied
> to actions, they generally signify the
> same with right and wrong.'
> (Review of Principal Questions in Morals
> Chpt. VI in Raphael, p.161)

'Fitness' can thus be used as a moral or non-moral term, but when Butler applied it to actions I do not consider that he used 'right' and 'fitting' synonymously. Suppose we ask the question 'can anything be fitting, but not right, or right but not fitting', if the reply is negative to both, then there can be no difference in meaning. So, if Butler makes the move, as I believe he does, of distinguishing between the two concepts, then it must be possible to find an example when one term holds and one does not. In fact, there is no such concrete illustration in his doctrine, but by studying certain passages we can discern the different senses in which he used 'rightness' and 'fittingness', and their relationship to the moral faculty.

According to Butler, and indeed to Price, 'fitting' was an indefinable term, but as we look at the text we may conclude that Butler uses it in much the same way as the words 'suitable' and 'correspond'. When Butler says that the notions we have of reward and ill dessert, come from a comparison of actions with the nature and capacities of the

agent, he refers to some actions - vicious ones - as 'unsuitable' to the nature of man.

> 'And hence arises a proper application of the epithets incongruous, unsuitable, disproportionate, unfit, to actions which our moral faculty determine to be vicious.'
>
> (Dissertation Upon Virtue, Section 7, p.404)

Thus an action is 'fitting' if it conforms to our nature, and as our nature is adapted to virtue, such action must be right. 'Fittingness' could be explained as prior suitability to virtue. In man, therefore, 'fittingness' and 'rightness' coincide, but when we turn to the animal kingdom it is a different matter. If it is in the nature of an animal to eat its young when in a state of extreme distress, one could say that such an action was 'fitting' (in a non-moral sense) but not right. Butler talks of brutes acting according to instinct, their bodily constitution and circumstances, thereby acting suitably to their whole nature, but not in a moral manner, for they have no principle of reflection, no power of decision. Wheareas in man, the ability to recognise the relation between 'fittingness' and virtue signifies a simple perception of the understanding, i.e. moral judgement. The link between reason and 'fitness' is most clearly seen in the Analogy where Butler is preoccupied with more than arbitrary orders issuing from the divine; he consequently states

that the will of God is determined by what is fit, by the right and reason of the case.

> 'And it seems as inconceivable to suppose God to approve one course of action, one end, preferably to another, which yet his acting at all from design implies that He does, without supposing somewhat prior in that end, to be the ground of the preference; as to suppose Him to discern an abstract proposition to be true, without supposing somewhat (i.e. something) prior in it, to be the ground of the discernment. It doth not therefore appear, that moral right is any more reliable to perception, than abstract truth is; or that it is any more improper to speak of the fitness and rightness of actions and ends, as founded in the nature of things, than to speak of abstract truth as thus founded.'
>
> (Analogy note to Chpt. VI, 16 p.151)

What is fit is therefore reasonable and right, and we discover what is 'fitting' by that part of conscience that is rational, for we cannot 'sense' fitness. But what textual evidence is there for concluding that it is the rational part of conscience that discerns 'fittingness'? Raphael, for instance,

strongly states that it is the function of speculative reason to judge which actions are fit to be done, and he gives in particular three quotations from the Analogy in support of his theory, which I will now briefly discuss.

The first passage occurs when Butler is discussing moral discipline and improvement; he states that even a finitely perfect being,

> 'endued with such propensions, together with moral understanding, as well including a practical sense of virtue, as a speculative perception of it.'
>
> (Analogy, Part I, Chpt V, 27 p.123)

can come to do wrong. My interpretation of this text, taken in conjunction with what Butler states in the Dissertation upon Virtue, is that he is talking again of the two aspects of conscience: the first, a sense of virtue and of what is right, which he later terms a 'perception of the heart'; and the second, a moral judgement or sentiment of the understanding. The second statement adduced by Raphael is when Butler says that the experience of the world

> 'hath a tendency to give us a practical sense of things very different from a mere speculative knowledge, that we are liable to vice and capable of misery.'
>
> (Analogy, Part I, Chpt, V, 31, p.127)

I think that here Butler is only saying that from a priori reasoning we can infer the possibility of vice from the existence of free will; but that this inference is very different from the experience of doing wrong ourselves or of seeing others act wrongly. The third passage adduced is the most difficult to interpret: Raphael suggests that in it Butler distinguishes between speculative and practical faculties of perception, the former being identified with speculative reason, and the latter with the moral understanding.

> 'As speculative reason may be neglected, prejudiced and deceived, so also may our moral understanding be impaired and perverted, and the dictates of it not impartially attended to. This indeed proves nothing against the reality of our speculative or practical faculties of perception.....'
>
> (Analogy, Part I, Chtp.VI, 19 p.156)

The exact role of speculative reason within Butler's moral philosophy is a little difficult to decipher, but I suggest that Butler talks of speculative reason in conjunction with religious matters, whilst practical reason is part of the mechanism of the moral faculty.[2] This interpretation is not

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[2] See Chpt. I, p 28. It is because of the confusion and complexities surrounding the use of speculative reason in other theories, that Butler says he prefers to use practical reason, and to view religion as a matter of fact.

only indicated in the particular text just mentioned, but is indeed borne out by Butler's predilection for empirical methods in moral studies. It is debatable whether he is saying that as an alternative to conscience, speculative reason could discern the relation of fittingness, by showing us when we act conformably to the right and wrong existent in the universe. For instance, if there were a race of men who had no conscience, only the faculty of reason, would Butler say that they would be able to find out what is right and wrong? Certainly these men could know that there was an inherent system of rewards and punishment in the universe, and that certain actions would be more to their advantage than others, but I think Butler would hold that they had no sense of right and wrong. His whole notion of conscience turns on the fact that men have an innate sense of the good and evil which independently exists, and from this the individual can deduce his duties.

For Butler completely disagreed with the Nominalists' view that the ultimate standard of morality was the arbitrary will of God. He and many of his contemporaries had followed Aquinas's doctrine, that while God always wills what is just, nothing is just solely because he wills it; the ideas of right and wrong are eternal and immutable. Hence Clarke maintained:

> 'There is such a thing as Fitness and Unfitness, eternally necessary and

> unchangeably in the Nature and Reason
> of things.'
> (On the Attributes of God, Proposition XII)

Shaftesbury also adheres to this doctrine.

> 'Whoever thinks there is a God, and
> pretends formally to believe that
> He is just and good, must suppose that
> there is independently such a thing as
> Justice and Injustice, Truth and
> Falsehood, Right and Wrong, according
> to which he pronounces that God is just,
> righteous and true.'
> (Inquiry, Book II, Chpt Section 2

Butler in turn uses the phrase 'immutable morality' (Analogy Part II, III, 13) and speaks of 'the external rule of right'. (Analogy, Part II, V, 6) and in Sermon XIV he talks of the

> 'conformity of the Divine Will to the Law
> of Truth in which the moral attributes
> of God consist.'
> (Sermon XIV, 17, p.255)

Again, he firmly states in the second part of the Analogy, that he believes in

> 'the moral fitness and unfitness of actions
> prior to all will whatever, which I apprehend
> as certainly to determine the Divine conduct,

as speculative truth and falsehood necessarily determine the Divine judgement.'

(Chpt. VIII, 24, p.367)

Despite the fact that Butler does not care to dwell on this doctrine of an eternal and immutable morality, it is an important part of his philosophy. If man has a natural predisposition to kindness and companion, and if our actions have to fit a permanent standard of virtue, to be right, then our morality has objectivity. The implication of this, as I see it, is that the ultimate moral characteristic is goodness or rightness, whereas Raphael would say that it was 'fittingness': and if we ask fitting to what, he would say to the production of the greatest amount of happiness. The function of conscience according to Raphael is to make sure we act conformably to our nature, and this activity as such is not a moral one; whether our actions are fitting is to talk of the genuine moral attribute which is discerned by speculative reason. The following example will illustrate what Raphael is saying: if animal x bathes it feels good, when it doesn't bathe it feels bad, and so it usually tries to bathe. However, animal x later finds out that if it did not bathe then it would be liable to catch diseases, so that there is an additional reason, and indeed now an 'over-riding' motive for its beahviour, for even if the weather is cold it still bathes.

My disagreement with Raphael is over his separation of conscience and reason. I maintain that conscience is a moral faculty which has two operational levels; the rational

part which takes note of all the facts in a moral situation and the intuitional part by which a moral pronouncement is made. This latter process as we have noted is rather complex, but perhaps becomes clearer when we realise that conscience for Butler is not merely a psychological faculty, but is a medium of communication between God and man: in the Sermons he speaks of conscience as 'the voice of God' - a similar view to that held by the Cambridge Platonists. Conscience acts according to general rules, but the source of this morality is divine, Butler sees the dictates of conscience as laws of God which contain certain sanctions. God makes his will known, not only through the conventional medium of the Scriptures, but through the nature of man, and specifically through the divinely implanted moral faculty.

Our discussion has now reached a position, when it is necessary to consider the claim, that Butler in his notion of conscience, is forwarding an intuitionist theory.[3] Intuitionism is usually explained as the direct and immediate awareness of moral principles, without inference or calculation. Moral judgements on individual actions or on particular classes of action, are thereby independent intuitions

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[3] Amongst the scholars who have maintained that Butler is to be classed as an intuitionist are Hudson, Rogers, Lillie and Frankena.

of transcendent truth. According to Raphael the difference between naturalism and intuitionism is ultimately a metaphysical one, namely:

> 'whether there are entities or characteristics of goodness and rightness transcending the feelings, conations and thoughts of men.'
>
> (Moral Judgement, Introduction, p.10)

An intuitionist holds that moral truths are fundamental, self-evident and universally applicable to all men; he would explain a different ethical system to his own by attributing it to moral blindness. Sometimes the definition of intuitionism is widened in order to ascribe the immediate awareness of moral values to reason or understanding. As a consequence philosophers such as Clarke and Price have been classed as Rational Intuitionists. I am a little suspicious of this latter definition and would prefer to use Raphael's explanation of the term. Representatives of this 'strict' intuitionism in the eighteenth century would be Shaftesbury and Hutcheson:

the latter for instance explains a 'sense' as

> 'every Determination of our Minds,
> to receive Ideas Independently on
> our Will, and to have Perceptions
> of Pleasure and Pain.'
>
> (An Essay on the Nature and Conduct
> of the Passions and Affections (1728),
> Section I, in Monro, p.256)

He continues by listing five 'senses', including the 'Moral Sense'.

The difference between Butler and intuitionists such as Hutcheson and Shaftesbury, lies in the very complexity of his concept of conscience. Having found that conscience is for Butler, 'our understanding and sense of good and evil' (Sermons X, 12, p.178) that is part reason and part feeling, we cannot call him a thorough-going intuitionist. Nevertheless, there are occasions when Butler appears to maintain that a man may see his duties intuitively (for example, Sermon VII, 14, p.132); and as we have already noted, this procedure goes under the name 'perception of the heart.' T. Macpherson forwards the interpretation that the intuitional aspect of conscience is particularly stressed in

the Analogy, where the intuitions are signs of God's will, which is determined by absolute goodness. On the other hand he considers that the Sermons emphasize the reflective aspect of conscience. (Philosophy, Vol. XXIII, and Vol. XXIV) Although I agree that the treatment of conscience is not quite the same in both works, I do not think there is any contradiction. The Sermons form an ethical treatise, and in them conscience is treated as a natural moral faculty; the Analogy is a religious tract and so explains the connection between God and conscience. What unifies Butler's theory of conscience is his consistent avowal that its dictates are the laws of our nature. Unfortunately, Butler's naturalism confuses the issue of whether or not he may be regarded as an intuitionist.

The intuitions of conscience may seem as divine commands or as a perception of whether an action is suitable to our nature. If we consider that Butler takes the latter view, and that man acts according to the way he is by nature, then Butler is not advocating intuitionism. For example, if you are violently sick every time you did something wrong, you do not need an intuition to tell right from wrong. But in a moral situation surely the problem is to decide whether your actions are suitable to your nature, and such a decision could require either a moral intuition or reason or both; and I think Butler's notion of conscience covers both procedures.

Furthermore, I see no difficulty in maintaining with Macpherson that the intuitions of conscience are ultimately signs of divine goodness. Butler, true to the spirit of his age, looked towards nature for inspiration, and there observed how actions were rewarded and punished, and thought he saw an immutable principle of goodness. Although Butler wished to advise men that to follow virtue was to follow nature, he did not want moral statements to depend on human beliefs or feelings. By maintaining that men were made to be naturally virtuous by God, Butler was grounding his naturalism firmly in religion.

The doctrine that the commands of conscience have an objective status has certain implications, and must be seen to fulfil a number of requirements. If the function of the moral faculty is to regulate and guide our conduct, then it should provide an answer to the question 'shall I or shall I not do this particular thing?' If I say 'I think I ought to do it' this does not entail that conscience demands that I do it. Feeling a thing is right is different from the things being right. Furthermore, one cannot say 'I believe that to do A would be to obey my conscience, but that to do A would be wrong.' However, another person may say 'she thinks that to do A would be to obey her conscience, but she would be wrong.' To obey conscience <u>is</u> to act according to what we are convinced is right.

If the maxim 'you ought to obey conscience' is to be a rule of conduct, it must be true of all cases. A decision always to obey conscience, involves a decision made in advance about a great number of individual cases, with the only information that to obey conscience would be to do your duty. Such a procedure can only be concerned with a principle that is infallible, as Butler seemed to believe conscience to be (although he never uses the word infallible), so that every time the original decision is obeyed one would be convinced that one was doing that which was now right. There must be no occasion when one asked 'shall I now obey my conscience?' For going against conscience is prima facie wrong. Indeed no general principle of conduct can be fallible, if it is to be of assistance in deciding particular questions about which we are in doubt. However, there may be instances when one person's conscience seems to give different commands in the same situation from another person's conscience. But how can conscience be infallible if there is disagreement? Butler would answer, as indeed would Kant, that conscience always tells us to do what is right, but that we are not always honest with ourselves, the other principles of action, passions etc., obscure the voice of conscience.

This whole idea of how men come to disobey conscience revolves round the concept of authority. Conscience is vulnerable by reason of the fact that a man's appetites and passions may often prove stronger than reflection for

> 'nothing is more manifest, than that affections and passions of all kinds influence the judgement.'
>
> (Sermons X, 15, p.180)

Although the moral right of conscience is not challenged, its psychological power may be impaired.

> 'Had it strength as it has right; had it power as it has manifest authority; it would absolutely govern the world.'
>
> (Sermon II, 19 p.64)

Man is often led into acts which in a cooler moment he knows to be wrong. There are two ways in which man can disobey conscience, and these are to be distinguished. First, a man can know what he should do, i.e. what conscience commands, but instead acts from a desire that will give immediate gratification. The desire is thus stronger than conscience, and so we have the age-old problem of 'right' versus weakness of the will. 'The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not that I do.' Secondly, the strength of the emotions is such that there is doubt as to what conscience is commanding - 'what shall I now do?'

Butler stated that there could be no doubt that there are things about which people deceive themselves. Men may

try to explain away their duty.

> 'Thus those courses, which, if man would fairly attend to the dictates of their own consciences, they would see to be corruption, excess, oppression, uncharitableness; these are refined upon - things were so and so circumstantiated - great difficulties are raised about fixing bounds and degrees; and thus every moral obligation whatever may be evaded.'
>
> (Sermon VII, 14, p.133)

Butler further believed that the formation of bad habits may make it hard to see where duty lies, whilst superstition or the habit of substituting ceremonial observance for moral conduct may cause disregard of conscience. In the Analogy Butler even suggests that difficulty in discovering the right course of action may be an essential part of some men's 'state of probation'. (Analogy Part II, Chpt. VI, 18, p293 Self-partiality may also interfere with our moral conduct, a practice Butler completely condemns.

> 'For a man to judge that to be the equitable, the moderate, the right part for him to act, which he would see to be hard, unjust, oppressive in another: this is plain vice,

> and can proceed only from great
> unfairness of mind.'
>
> (Sermon III, 5, p.70)

Genuine doubt is when we are not sure what commands conscience is issuing. If at every time the moral faculty dictated, our thumbs pricked there would be no confusion, our obligations would be very clear. But this would necessitate an original stage when we associated thumb pricking with right actions, which presupposes that we could recognise rightness. Sometimes, when reading Butler one gains the impression that he considers there to be few occasions for genuine doubt because the conscience of the individual is a clear and reliable guide to conduct. Man has a natural tendency to virtue, and with very little reflection, he naturally acts a just and good part in society. Men may differ as to how much of the natural sense of good and evil they possess, in that nature does not produce a mature human being, yet all are capable of improvement and development. So Butler thought it was possible that every man should, by exercise of the moral faculty, be able to find out what is good.

> 'Let any plain, honest man, before he
> engages in any course of action, ask
> himself Is this I am going about right,
> or is it wrong? Is it good or evil? I

> do not in the least doubt, but
> that this question could be answered
> agreeable to truth and virtue, by
> almost any fair man in almost any
> circumstance.'
>
> (Sermon III, 4, p.70)

The difficulty with this text is that there are not many plain, honest men, either now or in the eighteenth century; and the majority of moral decisions are not clear cut. On the whole, I think this was recognised by Butler, for he did recommend that a man knows what goodness and honesty are, by being honest and good. Man can act from a number of 'just and natural motives' such as a regard to God's authority, or a regard for justice or veracity,

> 'And he who begins a good life from
> any one of them and perseveres in it,
> as he is already in some degree, so he
> cannot fail of becoming more and more of
> that character, which is correspondent
> to the constitution of nature as moral'.
>
> (Analogy, I, V, p.133)

There is no conflict or contradiction between a man who obeys the teachings of religion and a man who obeys the injunction to follow nature. In Butler's philosophy both courses of action have the same result; and in his

concept of conscience the unification of the moral and the religious serves to impose a two-fold obligation on man. First, knowing that the laws of conscience come from God, men realised they must be obeyed, and thus there is present a sense of duty, as well as a sense of security gained from the knowledge that they are acting according to God's wishes. Secondly, the obligation to obey the rule of right that is innate within all men lies in the fact that it is the law of one's own nature, and accordingly it is our duty to walk in that path and follow the guide of conscience.

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